Lullaby For A Phantom by phantomgasm

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Summary:

With one mistake, Maddie loses everything she's worked so hard for. Her friend, her education, her plans for paranormal research. In a moment of desperation, she makes a mistake she'll regret for the rest of her life.

She promises her first born son to a being she convinces herself is a ghost.

//

"Fruitloop?"

A six year old boy glances up at a red eyed entity, not at all fearing it's demonic horns and sharp claws.

"Yes, dear child?"

"Are you my guardian angel?"

No, the proper answer would be. Vlad is far from heavenly, filled with unholy blood and desires for revenge. But is he to tell that to a child, his little badger? Of course not. Daniel need not to know that. "Yes, I'm your guardian angel."

That goofy grin could sway even the darkest of souls; Vlad would know. "Can you sing to me?"

He doesn't need to ask which tune, for Vlad knows it all too well. "Of course." He'd do anything for Daniel. Anything.

Relationships: Danny Fenton/Vlad Masters, Minor or Background Relationship(s)
Comments: 179
Kudos: 361

Chapter 1

Author's Note:

> Firstly: THERE ARE LYRICS IN THIS FIC. I have checked and the song IS public domain, however, so I believe it should be fine. Feel free to tell me if I'm wrong though.
>
> This is gonna start out Badger Cereal and move into Pompous Pep once Danny gets older.
>
> Warning: Vlad has like ZERO morals but his heart is in the right place! Not only is he Vald, but he's a DEMON. What do you expect of him? At least he's nice to Danny.
>
> This work was inspired by the story "My Fair Lady" by Urchin Of The Riding Stars on Fanfiction . net! I've been reading old fanfics recently and Urchin and Nimrod are two of my favorite writers over on ye old Fanfic site.
>
> It was also inspired by the "You Are My Sunshine" cover by the Phantoms!

Womanhood, Maddie thinks, is terrible. Not only did she get harassed and bullied for being, as her mother puts it, an *early bloomer,* but every single month she has to lay curled up in her dorm with cramps so bad she can hardly walk. Her roommate is no help, the other woman believes that because *her* menstrual cycles are short and only slightly painful, Maddie must be exaggerating!

It makes studying a nightmare, and walking to class damn near impossible. God, she wishes doctors would just listen to her. Maybe then she could get some kind of note that would give her online classes during these times. Birth control and pain medication can

only help her so much.

Lucky for her, she's got two friends who *do* understand. Shockingly, they're both men, but after hearing the stories from Vlad about his sister's endometriosis and Jack's mother developing ulcers on her ovaries...well, she's just glad she has those two around.

Jack, the dear, has brought her a giant plate of fudge. Chocolate may not be the cure to all of her pain, but the warm gooey goodness sure does help her feel better.

Vlad is searching through her drawers for her heating pad. She wishes she could figure out how to make the thing portable *and* easily hidden, because it's a wonderful piece of magic that dulls the agony that has become of her abdomen. Unfortunately, though, it's bulky and needs to be plugged into a wall to work.

"You guys don't have to come over *every* time I'm bleeding, you know that, right?" She probably looks horrible right now, face broken out in pimples and hair an unkept mess. Maddie wishes she had the energy to get out of her pajamas and make herself at least *presentable,* with Jack here. Not that the man could care about wether or not she's dolled up- he'd probably be awe stricken by her in rags, but...she likes to look nice for him.

"Nonsense," Vlad says, plugging the wire to her heating pad into the wall. A part of her feels bad for constantly making their friend the

third wheel, though he doesn't know it. Jack and herself decided it was best to wait to tell Vlad about their relationship until they can get him into one. The last thing they want to do is make their friend feel like he's intruding. "You shouldn't be caring for yourself while you're in pain."

Placing the plate of fudge onto the desk at the head of her bed, Jack adds, "Right! Let us do all the work, Madds. You're always bringing us soup n' stuff when we're sick."

He's entirely right. Maddie's always wanted children, and it causes her to end up taking a motherly role in many of her friendships. Hell, she carries a tin of cookies for her often hungry boyfriend and hair ties for Vlad, being that with how busy the boys always are, they end up forgetting little things.

"You guys are too sweet," she murmurs and takes the heating pad from Vlad, placing it at her naval. "I don't know what I'd do without you."

The two men share a smile, Vlad sitting at the end of the bed and Jack taking her head and placing it in his lap. Eyes lighting up, the larger of the three jerks his head to the direction of the smaller male, "Vladdy, you should do that thing for Maddie! You know, what you did when I broke my hand, to calm me down!"

Vlad's cheeks tint pink and he shakes his head violently, "No, no, I-

absolutely not!"

"Oh, come on, your voice is so soothing," Jack rests his elbow on the headboard, using his hand to prop his head up. *"Pleeeasseee?* It'll make Maddie feel better!"

"Voice?" Maddie questions, "Vlad, you...sing?" Such a hobby doesn't seem like something he would do. Reading is usually his thing, chess not too far off, and though he'd probably never admit to it, she's seen his hidden collection of slasher movies.

The man bites his lower lip, eyes casting downward bashfully. "Not really. It's not anything good, I doubt it'll help."

Leaning down, her boyfriend whispers, "You ask him to do it. You're a girl, he can't say no to you. It's one of his weird posh rules."

While she doesn't want to force Vlad to do anything he isn't comfortable with, she is rather curious. "We won't make fun of you, promise," she says, reaching down to tug on the end of his shirt. His gray-blue eyes lift to meet her's, and she can practically *see* his resolve breaking, "You don't have to do anything you don't want to...but I would like to hear it, if you'd let me."

With a sigh, Vlad gives her a faint smile. "Alright," then clears his

throat.

"You are my sunshine,

My only sunshine,

You make me happy,

When skies are gray,"

Her violet eyes widen at the sound. Vlad has always had a deep, silky voice, but when he sings? It's soft, comforting, like a warm fire on a winter evening. She can tell Jack thinks so as well from the way his eyes are drooping, and with his big hand gently combing at her hair, she's slowly starting to fall asleep.

"You'll never know, dear,

How much I love you,

Please don't take,

My sunshine away."

Vlad leans back against the wall, looking up at the ceiling. She lightly kicks him with a socked foot, "Quit lying about being good at stuff, it doesn't suit you."

He chuckles, and stands up, taking one of her throw pillows from the ground and wedging it behind her sleeping boyfriend. "When my father would start to get bad, my mother would take me and my sister to one of the guest bedrooms to hide from him," Vlad explains, pushing Jack back slowly so that he's propped up against the pillow rather than his arm, "she would sing that to try and keep us from crying too loudly, so my father wouldn't find us."

Frowning, she reaches out and takes his wrist into her hand. "Stay," she tells him, because she knows when Vlad gets like this, he tends to lock himself away and pretend that he *isn't* feeling anything at all. Then, after bottling up his emotions for so long, he explodes, taking it out on himself and occasionally others, though never on purpose. He just seems to...split. Like he doesn't notice that he's screaming or crying until he's burnt his hand on the stove or until Jack is holding his arms to his side to keep him from doing so.

"You remind me of her," Vlad leans in and presses a kiss to Jack's forehead, then to her own. It's one of the many reasons Vlad's been

an outcast from his family and many other students. He isn't afraid to show affection to the people he loves, regardless of their gender. It's also something she admires about the man. "Get some rest, Maddie. I'll be back to pick up Jack in an hour."

Watching him go, she wishes she could find the words to convince him to open up. Jack has told her that Vlad's afraid of scaring her away, scared he might make her think he's *too damaged.* The man would probably have kept his secrets from his other friend as well, had Jack not been around to witness some of the abuse he endured last year.

Jack went home with Vlad, to meet his family over christmas break. Maddie would've gone, had she not already planned to meet with her sister, Alicia. According to her boyfriend, as Vlad clammed up and would storm off if asked about the incident, Vlad's father had snapped when Jack jokingly smooched Vlad's cheek under the mistletoe.

Mr. Masters threw his son across the table, called him some choice words, and threatened to call the police if Jack didn't leave the house. Vlad and him drove all the way back to their dorm and the smaller man cried for hours, because his father forbid him from seeing Mrs. Masters unless he *gave up his lifestyle* and *repented for his sins.*

Maddie doesn't know if Vlad's attracted to men at all, but to cast out their own son for who he *loves?* She can't imagine doing something so horrible.

One day, she hopes Vlad's mother gains the courage to leave Mr. Masters. Maddie knows that's why Vlad wants to be successful so badly; his major is in business, despite his interests mostly being in the paranormal like his friends. He wants to get enough money to be able to take her out of that hell hole.

She cuddles into Jack's stomach, comforted by his presence. Jack has such a big, loving family, and while her parents might deem her field of education to be strange, they still support her. It's unfair that someone as gentle as Vlad has had to suffer through such violence.

Fuck them. Her and Jack are his family now, the Masters, excluding Mrs. Masters, don't know what they're losing.

Somewhere along the line, she finds herself far from campus. The cellphone at her side drops the ground, her shaking hands unable to keep it in her grip.

Jack is waiting back at the apartment. Tinkering, likely. Distracting himself. She should've stayed, held him, but he said he would be fine if she needed some air. And God does she, her lungs feeling as though they're being constricted, a snake weaving around them.

They put a man in the hospital. Vlad, the boy who had no one but them to turn to. Maddie and Jack's idiocy got him hospitalized, and then she proceeded to let her guilt keep her from supporting him. And of course, Jack stayed with her, worried about his lover who'd begun to sleep most of her days.

Six months after Vlad was hospitalized, he was gone. Not by the ecto - acne, nor radiation. No, Maddie Fenton caused the man who'd sing her to sleep if she asked, to steal as much medication as he could find, escape the hospital, and walk ***here*** *to swallow the pills that would end his life.*

This is where he died.

This is where Madeline Fenton killed Vlad Masters.

She's lost everything. The accident caused the school to rip their scholarships straight from their fingers and practically kick them straight off of campus. All of this will follow any career she attempts to make, will keep both herself and Jack viewed as monsters.

Maddie deserves that, but Jack? Jack hadn't known any better. She'd been rushing him the days prior. While she thought the portal needed more testing, she was putting pressure on her boyfriend to get it done quickly. He wanted to impress her, and Vlad...

Vlad wanted that, too. She's well aware that the man harbored feelings for her, and feels even worse knowing that had she not led him on, maybe, he wouldn't have been so fixated on the portal. Maybe he would've been more careful with getting so close to it, if she hadn't been hyping him up about it.

Everything is ruined. And she only has herself to blame. How can she fix this? She took Jack's best friend away, she's destroyed their careers, any chance at making a name for themselves.

In the distance, she sees a figure. Something moving. Something-

Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

> Woken by an impulse, Maddie realizes something isn't quite right when the baby monitor is bit too silent.

Notes for the Chapter:

> I'm sorry in advanced if my titles are bad or if my notes are weirdly written or whatever; I post late at night when my anxiety is at it's lowest, also so I can force myself to sleep and not think about negative stuff.
>
> Anyways, I'm ALSO sorry that this is starting out REALLY horror esque. Yes it is a horror story, but I SWEAR there will be more fluff once we finally get to Danny's pov. Maddie's sittin here like " THE GHOST OF MY DEAD FRIEND IS HAUNTING MY SON" while Danny's POV is just "my friend has weird blue skin and talks funny but i love him anyway :)"

Call it motherly instincts, but Maddie, who usually sleeps soundly throughout the night, wakes randomly at four in the morning. This just so happens to be when the baby monitor is, for whatever reason, not working. At all. Not a single sound comes from the thing, that would normally at least emit white noise if her baby was silent.

Feeling her stomach drop, she glances to her husband, who's sound asleep beside her. Her feet take her out into the hall, where she tip toes lightly to the nursery.

Faint singing can be heard as she gets closer to the door, a sound that's familiar in a way she can't quite remember. The voice is too deep to be Jazz, and Jack is still asleep. So who the hell is singing to her baby?

After checking to make sure she has both an ecto-gun *and* a regular one, she presses herself to the hallway, standing just next to Danny's door. Ear to the wall, she listens, mouth going dry as she listens to her baby softly coo at the man who's singing to him.

"The other night, dear,

As I lay sleeping,

I dreamt I held you,

In my arms-"

With trembling hands, she twists the knob and swings open the door, frazzled, sleepy brain searching for *him.* The person she knows that voice belongs to, the one that's haunted her nightmares for years and filled both herself and her husband with immense guilt. There's no way he could be here, lest he's become a ghost and his here to haunt her for everything she's done to him. She wouldn't doubt it; after all, she does deserve it.

Vlad's not there. Nobody is. Only Danny, laying in his crib, groping up at the air and humming happily. Maddie isn't one to question her gut, so she clears every nook and cranny in the room before she settles beside her newborn, who blinks up at her with his robin's egg eyes.

How could she damn her child the way she has? Maddie tries so hard to forget what she's done, to put it in the back of her mind so that, for the years that she *does* have her baby, things will be pleasant. But every time he looks up at her, so hopeful, like she's the beacon of motherly safety that she should be, her heart throbs painfully. A grimm reminder of the fate she's sealed for her poor baby.

She wants to take him with her, have him lay between herself and Jack so that she can properly protect him, but she knows how much her husband tosses and turns. The poor baby could end up crushed by accident. Besides, she was probably just hearing things. After all, the baby monitor seems to be working now.

Maddie takes one last look at her son's pastel room, before closing the door and heading to check on her daughter.

As she leaves, a figure pops into the room out of nowhere. In the crib, Daniel giggles with delight, happy that his friend has returned. Deathly blue, clawed fingers rub along his rosey cheeks, a heavy breath leaving the monster's nose. Scarlet eyes fixate on the door that Maddie has left slightly open, boiling fury building in his chest as he wills it to shut gently. He wishes he could slam it, shake the walls and send vases flying.

He doesn't, though. Maddie cannot know he's here, not yet.

Cold. So very cold. Vlad cannot escape it, the hairs on his arms frozen upwards no matter how many times he rubs them against the rough blanket those nurses brought to him. His face is aching, scorching, covered in angry bumps like he's a child with chicken pox.

Pain engulfs his body. Anyone that comes in his room- doctors and nurses, never visitors- wears protective suits. Radiation, they tell him, and he feels so weak when he hears it. Of course he would be suffering from radiation poisoning, that portal turned on while his head was ***inside.*** *How and why that turned his hair a stunning silver is beyond him, but the ache in his bones and the shudder in his breaths make sense.*

It's been two weeks since he's been admitted. Every single day since then has been spent alone. Really, he didn't expect his parents to show up, though sometimes he dreams he hears his mother's singing and wakes with tears pooling in his eyes. How he misses the woman, who waved sorrowfully out the window of his father's mansion the last time he saw her .

If he ever gets out of here, he hopes he can fulfill his dream of saving her.

Other than his family, who would probably scoff at even the mention of coming to visit him, all he has are his friends. Where are Jack and Maddie? Surely they know what happened, they were right beside him when the portal turned on. Jack pressed the button prematurely; Vlad must've missed his warning, too focused on making the damn thing work

so that he could get Maddie to be proud of him, to see her lovely smile.

Why haven't they come to visit? Did the thing hurt his friends, too? He's asked the doctors where they are, if they're okay, but they won't tell him a thing. They just say, "focus on yourself for now," and leave it at that.

He hopes they're okay, prays they're just busy with finals. They'll come to see him soon. Maddie and Jack wouldn't have abandoned him. They love him.

He isn't alone.

They'll see him soon.

Notes for the Chapter:

hdkfofifjfkd dont worry vlad ur not the only character getting whumped. Poor guy just wants his friends :,)

Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

The Fentons celebrate Christmas

Notes for the Chapter:

I usually upload at night but last night when I was supposed to be convincing myself to join the pomppep discord server, I ended up procrastinating via getting in a 4 hour long discord call with some friends where we discussed the game my friend was playing about becoming a cultist!
I still have not actually joined the server because I'm a BABY. i got an invite but because im stupid i ended up waiting too long and it expired. S'what i get for being a coward lol.

Christmas is never an easy time in the Fenton household.

Jack is constantly trying to brainwash their children into believing in the corporate invention of Santa Claus, a man who most certainly *does not exist.* Lying to such young, impressionable minds about something made solely to make companies money is horrible in Maddie's opinion; Jack, however, thinks she's being a *scrooge.*

Not only does cooking always end up going wrong, because she's kind of horrible at it in the first place and ecto-goo ending up bringing their food to life is a rather common occurrence, but decorations and shopping is terrible. They spend a good portion of December fighting while the children are watching cartoons.

Maddie groans in frustration as she sets aside a blackened ham. Their home is going to be filled to the brim with Jack's family, which usually only ends up causing even *more* stress because then she fights with them about Santa, and her mother-in-law will start going off about how Jack made a mistake in marrying her, and- gah! She wishes for once they could just, make hot chocolate and sit around the tree like a normal family, and *not* deal with stupid fantasies such as Santa Claus.

It doesn't help that Jack's family will walk into the kitchen, see her shitty cooking, and immediately start complaining. They'll take over the whole thing, tossing out her hard work and using all their food to make some giant feast. Maddie will have to sit in the corner, arms crossed, as Jack's father makes misogynistic jokes about how Jack's luck is terrible if he managed to find a woman that's useless in the kitchen.

And she isn't! Her baking skills are phenomenal! The cinnamon pie in the fridge kicks ass, she just...can't cook regular meals. Take-out consists of most of their food, being that Jack is often too busy to cook and the children are too young to work the oven. She thanks the

heavens that Jazz is an advanced girl, because she often ends up setting up simple breakfasts and lunches for her and her brother, while their parents are stuck down in the lab.

Speaking of which...

"Honey, where are the kids?" She shouts to her husband, who's pinning red, white, and green lights to the wall.

"Jazz took Danny outside to play in the snow," Jack responds, wincing and shoving his finger in his mouth. The hammer he'd been holding clammers to the ground, and she's suddenly very glad the children aren't inside despite her wishing she could ask them to clean up. Little ones would be in a tad bit too much danger, with nails scattered all over the floor and hot, burnt food on the kitchen table.

Soon enough, Jack's side of the family has arrived. His brothers are sitting on the couch with some hallmark movie blasting so loudly Maddie can hardly hear herself think. In the kitchen, her husband's parents are making *"good natured criticisms"* about her food, which translates to calling it shit and dumping it into the garbage. She isn't sure what she did to make Jack's family hate her so much, but they certainly don't approve of anything she does.

Maddie ends up in a screaming match with her husband when her mother-in-law mentions that she's going to invite a *lovely girl* she wants Jack to meet. The man says that his mother is just teasing, but Maddie knows better. That woman would laugh at her funeral, hates her so much that she treats even her grandchildren like mistakes.

Storming off, she decides to spend the rest of the evening with her children. Jazz is still outside, nose flushed pink and gloved hands working on a family of snow people. A quick glance tells her that Danny isn't with his sister, and nervousness creeps past her stress. "Where's your brother?"

"Upstairs coloring," Jazz answers, frowning at the smallest snowman. This one must be Danny, seeing as the rest of the family is already finished. "Mama?"

"Yes, sweetie?"

Pausing, the ginger girl twirls a stick in her hands. Her seafoam green eyes crawl up the side of Fenton Works, stopping at the yellow glow coming from her brother's window. "Nothin'," mumbles the six year old, who turns her back to her mother and shoves the stick into the snowboy's side.

Now Jack's arguing with his parents, angry that they've made his wife upset. While her heart swells at her husband defending her, she knows interfering would only make things worse, so she sneaks past the group and up the stairs.

Déjà vu hits her hard when her ears make out an ever so quiet voice singing. This one has to be her son's, childish and high pitched, but those lyrics are shaking her to her core. Maddie and Jack don't sing to their children, not after *Vlad,* and they forbid that song in particular. Once, Alicia sent the kids a doll that sang nursery rhymes, including *You Are My Sunshine,* and they were sure to toss it out upon that discovery.

"You make me happy,

When skies are gray,

You'll never know, dear,

How much I love you,"

Goosebumps pricking at her skin, she steps into her little boy's room, who stops his singing and glances up at her from his paper. "Hi mommy."

With a smile, she heads over to the four year old, sitting down beside him. Over his shoulder, she peeks at his drawing, brows furrowing at the sight of it. Beside a doodle that's obviously Danny, is a figure that appears to be a ghost of some kind. Those black horns and sharp fangs couldn't belong to a human of any kind, after all.

As she watches Danny fill in the skin of the creature, her hands become clammy with sweat.

*Sickly skin appearing near green under the fluorescent hospital lights, eyes red from crying, exhaustion turning the skin underneath his eyes a dark purple. Vlad looks awful, so miserable, and **they** did that to him, they put him here, they damn near killed their best friend.*

Whirling around, she bolts away from the room before Vlad can catch sight of her. Jack chases after her.

They don't try to visit again after that. He's better off without them there anyways.

The creature is a blue-green color, pale and dead looking. It's eyes are a vivid scarlet, and from it's hand, a ball of pink is produced. She doesn't notice she's trembling until her son turns to her, worry etching his features. "Mommy?"

"You..." She whispers, throat feeling as though it's closing, swelling, "who's that, Danny?"

"My friend. He sings to me when I'm sad, n' plays with me when you're busy," Danny sets down the pink crayon and rummages in the tin beside him for a different color.

Figuring it must be some kind of imaginary friend, she tries to push away the demanding question of *why,* why that song, of all the ones her child could've picked? "Why don't you go play with your sister in the snow?"

"Jazzie doesn't like my friend. She said he's scary and she won't play with me if he's around," triumphantly, the boy fishes a green out from the container of art supplies, and signs his name on the paper.

"Is your friend a ghost?" She asks, watching as he pulls out a new sheet of paper. Danny shrugs, and she continues, "You shouldn't befriend ghosts, Danny. They're very dangerous." Even if it's just an imaginary friend, she shouldn't encourage him to get close to anything spectral. Ghosts love to take advantage of unknowing children, and Maddie will be damned if her baby ends up getting hurt by some ghost because he made up a fake *nice* one.

"In exchange for your wish, your first born son..."

She shudders, and pushes the memory deep down into the depths of her brain.

Danny glares at her, "Not him. Fruitloop is nice to me. He said he wants to protect me. You're just being mean!"

With a sigh, Maddie places her hand on her toddler's, "Danny, *Fruitloop* isn't real. That's why he can't hurt you, he's just pretend. *Real* ghosts aren't, though, and they *can* hurt you."

"He is real! Just like Santa!" The boy shouts, standing abruptly and running out the door with his drawing.

Great, now she's going to have to hear from Jack's family about making her son cry. She didn't mean to make Danny so upset, she just wanted to make sure he knew of the dangers of ghosts, so he doesn't

go and get himself hurt!

Feeling cold, she makes to follow Danny, the hairs on the back of her neck standing. As she's leaving, something crashes the floor, causing her head to snap in the direction of the noise. On the floor is a picture, the framed family portrait Danny keeps at his bedside. The entire thing is shattered, but...

Not a single crack is near her son, despite every other family member being covered by broken glass.

Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock.

God, he wishes he could shatter that clock against the wall. Stomp on the glass pieces that remain, take those to the window and throw them as far as possible. Anything to stop that noise that reminds him of how utterly empty the room is.

There's only Vlad. Vlad, in his hospital bed alone. Vlad, who's hand is currently flickering in and out of existence. Vlad, trying to remain calm at the memory of blood red eyes staring back at him in the mirror.

No one. Three weeks, and not a single person has come. Where are Jack and Maddie? Why haven't they visited him yet? Did he really mess things up there, too? His accident must've gotten them in trouble. Oh, God, are they ***angry*** *with him? He'd been so foolish, sticking his head into the portal like that. Of course it hadn't been safe! It's a God damn portal!*

He's ruined everything. They're going to get kicked out of the school, they-are the police going to get involved. No, they can't. Jack and Maddie were smart, standing away from the portal. Vlad had been the stupid one, getting so close to it. It's not their fault.

But everyone will think it is. They hate him. They're leaving him, just like his parents, because he's ***stupid*** *and* ***not good enough.*** *Never good enough. He's managed to ruin the few decent relationships he had, all*

because he wanted to impress Maddie.

Idiot.

Oaf.

Worthless.

His eyes are glowing again. His arm phases through the bed and he yelps, yanking it away. It's happening again, he's going to become that monster again. The nurses will see, they'll alert the staff, and Vlad will be whisked away to some lab to be dissected like a rat.

He's going to die here. Alone.

Notes for the Chapter:

Vlad is straight up not having a good time.
Also wanted to show Vlad actually being scared because while it's totally in character for him to mask his fear with anger, even Vlad must show actual fright every once in a while. Especially before he'd succumbed to his "I'm miserable so everyone needs to be miserable" attitude.

Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

> Secrets are starting to take a tole on the Fenton family.

Notes for the Chapter:

> We finally get Danny's point of view! Which means some cute stuff, though this chapter is still pretty horror-esque. The next one has more cute stuff, though, so don't worry!

Being in the fifth grade isn't as easy as one might think. Elementary was fun; while there were some mean kids, they were usually too busy playing to notice Danny. And besides, no one was pressuring him to talk to girls or make friends, or go to parties.

But for whatever reason, middle school is when everyone realizes they want to grow up as soon as possible. Which means that Dash, who had occasionally picked on Danny before, is now the most popular kid in school. He's got more girlfriends than most kids can count, everyone wants to be his friend, and he's decided anyone that isn't as cool as he is, is a loser who needs to be taught their place in the world.

Which leaves Danny with bruises, stolen lunch money, and vandalized backpacks.

What Dash doesn't know, though, is that Danny has a very special

secret. A friend, who isn't very keen on letting anyone hurt him. Plasmius, who Danny called Fruitloop as a baby and still does on occasion because it makes his protector huff all funny-like, has cool powers, like a superhero. He can fly, go through walls, turn invisible, and even possess people! There's some other stuff, too, but he only uses those when Danny's *really* in danger. Like that time some weirdo was following him home from school.

Plasmius has been a bit busy recently, so he hasn't been around as much. Something to do with *reporting to his superiors.* It's a shame, since Danny's parents are *also* really busy with their ghost portal, so he ends up alone a lot. But luckily, now that he's keeping Plasmius a secret, Jazz will keep him company. Like Mom, she thinks his friend was just an imaginary friend, so she isn't too scared to be around him anymore.

Soon enough, though, Danny once again has his spector- is a he ghost? He has to be, right? What else would he be? Well, Plasmius is with him more often, invisible when he needs to be and attacking when anyone dares to try and hurt Danny. Dash learns quickly that trying to give the smaller boy a swirlie will result in finding himself locked in a janitor's closet with cleaning items tumbling down upon him.

And of course, not a single piece of evidence linking the two events. Though Plasmius' protections have gained some notice, it's only really caused other students to avoid Danny, and teachers to be uncomfortable around him for reasons they don't know. The child doesn't mind; he doesn't need to be friends with mean kids at school when he has Plasmius, who's ten times cooler.

It makes living a little easier, having the ghost around. Mom and Dad fight a lot these days, for reasons Danny isn't too sure of. Something about their work, something about Dad's family. Something about them never spending time together outside of work anymore, something about Mom not wanting to spend time with Danny anymore. Always, there's *something*, to cause yelling, to cause fear.

Dad stays in the lab, even when he isn't working. Danny sometimes goes down there, and he's just kind of tinkering around with his tools. The older Fenton will smile and explain to Danny what he's doing, then he'll go on a ramble about a story from his college days. With that will follow this sadness in his eyes, and tell Danny to go upstairs.

Plasmius never follows when Danny plays with Dad. He doesn't seem to like the man very much, but won't tell Danny why.

Sure, he'll give him those fake reasons, the kind adults tell you when they don't want you to know the truth. But the real reason, Danny doesn't know. He only knows it must be serious, because he can practically *feel* the anger radiating off of the spector when Danny comes back from the lab. It's why the boy is a bit hesitant to play with Dad, but that's his *father*. He has to make sure the man's okay. Plasmius must understand that much.

Mom...isn't around. She's in the house, yes, but she isn't really *there*. Danny will climb upstairs and hear her crying, and he'll open the door to her bedroom nervously because he wants to help. And upon seeing him, with her calloused fingers wrapped around the neck of a bottle, she'll sob harder. She'll shout for him to get out, and when he shuts the door, she'll be choking out quiet apologies. Danny has a

feeling they aren't directed at him, though.

Plasmius doesn't like Mom, either, but in a different way than how he dislikes Dad. When Danny stumbles into his room, teary eyed, after again being pushed away by his mommy, Plasmius will open his arms and hold the child tightly. Allowing Danny to whimper and take solace in his chest, as waves of anger mixed with sorrow and a look of heartbreak in his eyes as he does it.

"You are my sunshine,

My only sunshine,

Sings his caretaker, who looks much like the man from those stories of woe Plasmius would tell Danny before bedtime. About three friends, a man who loved a woman and his backstabbing best friend, who seduced the woman away from him. Then, they killed the man together, turning him into a powerful ghost, who then found a badger. The badger would become the lonely ghost's companion, and they would rule the world together, eventually getting revenge on the couple that had killed the man.

"You make me happy,

When skies are gray,"

Danny wishes things could be different. That the man and his friends could together again. Or, that Mom would look at him, would hold him, instead of crying or screaming or even at times, hitting. He wishes his daddy wasn't so sad all the time, and wishes Jazz wouldn't stay with her friends most nights, leaving him to deal with their parents alone.

"You'll never know, dear,

How much I love you,"

Of course, he isn't quite alone. He has Plasmius, who brings him food when the adult Fentons forget and takes him to the park. But there's only so much he can do without revealing himself, so when Mom and Dad are screaming loud enough that the little boy is hiding under his blankets, all Plasmius can do is make him feel loved.

"Please don't take,

My sunshine away."

And while his little badger may not know it, Vlad fills Jack and

Maddie's heads with nightmares and nudges their palms to the stove and has their experiments blow up in their faces. He slashes the tires to the RV so they can't get home from the store, giving him more alone time with Daniel.

Jasmine isn't tormented, though he thinks about pouring salt in her cereal when she tells her brother that her playdates are for *big girls only*. A part of him knows she just needs a break from mothering a child that isn't even her's, but a bigger, more angry part huffs *good riddance,* because Daniel is *his* to take care of, not her's. She's a rotten playmate anyways, treating her brother like he's some patient at a psych ward.

However, Daniel loves the girl and the one time Vlad *did* hurt her- he only tore the head off her doll, it was much less than what she did, getting his little darling in trouble so that Maddie would pay attention to her- the boy pulled the silent treatment on him until he replaced the damn toy. So the red-headed obstacle, who steals his time with Daniel away from him, is off-limits.

"Sing again," his boy whispers when downstairs, crashing can be heard. Vlad sends an invisible double to watch the scene, and finds that Maddie threw a whiskey bottle at her husband. She's on the kitchen floor, head clutched in her hands, and Jack is standing stiller than Vlad's ever seen before.

Silence fills the room.

"The other night, dear,

As I lay sleeping,

I dreamt I held you,

In my arms,"

On the ground, Maddie stiffens, shoulders that were previously bobbing with her sobs now bunched at her ears. Jack's eyes slowly drift from his wife to where Vlad stands at the stairs, though the man cannot see him, he can hear the double singing in tune with the Vlad upstairs.

"When I awoke, dear,

I was mistaken,"

Trembling, both parents make their way towards the sound. Vlad leads them to Daniel's room before the double joins the original.

"So I hung, my head and I cried."

They find nothing but their sleeping ten year old. Jack turns to Maddie, asking if she, too, heard their dead friend's voice. His wife does not answer him; she bolts to their room and locks the door, keeping him from perusing her.

They left him .

Discarded him, like he was worthless. What an idiot he was, assuming that they had cared for him just as much as he had loved them. Jack destroyed him, his foolishness turning him into a ***monster.*** *Vlad's reflection bears that of a freak, a glowing, half-dead, freak.*

Unrecognizable. When he sees himself now, he can't put that face to his soul- whatever's left of it, anyways.

Jack ruined his life, his chances of ever telling Maddie how he feels, and

doesn't even have the decency to apologize. For everything Vlad has ever done for that bubbling idiot, all he gets in return is a hospital room and doctors who tell him that they have no idea what's wrong with him. Suffering alone, constantly afraid he's going to wake up in a government facility with his chest cavity open and on display.

Vlad doesn't fear death. In fact, he embraces it. Anything would be better than watching the illness take over his body, the ectoplasm slowly poisoning his blood. Cancer, the doctors think it, but Vlad knows better.

No longer does he yearn for his two ex-lab partners at his side. Jack stole Maddie from him, probably convinced her to stay away so that Vlad couldn't confess his feelings. Though, that would be making him seem like some master manipulator, and Jack is obviously too stupid for such a thing.

What Vlad wants, is ***revenge.*** *He wants them to feel as abandoned as he, wants to force the ache in his bones to theirs. Vlad wants to tear them apart, ruin their happiness. Why should they get joy, when they stole it from him? Jack doesn't deserve a good life, and once he's shown Maddie just how much she hurt him by running away with a killer, she'll realize the error of her ways and love him as she should.*

All he has to do to now, is get out of this infernal hospital.

Notes for the Chapter:

I can't imagine knowing you've sold your child's soul

to a ghost would be very good for your mental state, and Maddie's is starting to take a turn for the worst. Things are only gonna get rougher for her from here, and honestly,....she kinda deserves it. At least in this fic she does

Chapter 5

Summary for the Chapter:

> "All you want in life for the price of your soul,
> All the money you can fold,
> Power that you can hold,
> I'll put you in control."
>
> - Devil's train, The Lab Rats

Notes for the Chapter:

> Hows did Vlad become a demon, you might ask? Well, you're about to find out!

The event is swept under the rug, never spoken of again.

Twelve is a bit old to be having imaginary friends, and considering Danny has no control over Plasmius whatsoever, he knows the man has to be something else entirely. A ghost would seem plausible, if the Fenton house wasn't rigged to blast alarms every time an ecto-signature is spotted. Besides, Plasmius has been hit by one of his parent's inventions before, and it didn't effect him at all.

Danny considers the fact that he might be crazy. Maybe he's an early schizophrenic, or some other mental disorder that would cause hallucinations. But such things don't run in their family, and he's had Plasmius around for as long as he can remember! Infants can't have mental illnesses...can they?

But no. If Plasmius were a creation of his mind, the creature wouldn't able able to effect others. And Danny has seen many times what his friend can do- nothing too terrible, just shoving Dash in a locker and *maybe* leaving him in there for a bit too long. Dash had it coming, though! Danny actually *did* his homework that day, and the jerk stole it!

The only problem is, is that if Plasmius *isn't* some weird hallucination or a ghost, what is he? Why is he protecting Danny from dumb things like bullies, or bringing him dinner, gifts, and playing games with him? What spooky, monstrous thing like Plasmius likes spending his time singing a pre-teen to sleep?

He's asked these questions before, and the only response Plasmius ever bothers to give him, is:

"I am your guardian. That is all."

Which is utterly stupid. There's nothing special about Danny. He doesn't go out and fight evil ghosts like his parents, nor is he mega smart like his older sister. Danny isn't rich and at risk of being kidnapped for ransom like Sam, and he most certainly isn't some amazing tech-whizz like Tucker. Why is a supernatural being protecting *him,* of all people?

As a kid, he always thought it was because of his parents. Sure, he still appreciates being saved from their crumbling marriage, but other

children have been through worse. What happens in the Fenton household would warrant a a call to child protective services, not... whatever summoned Plasmius.

Not that he's going to call anyone on his parents. They aren't bad people, just dysfunctional. Stressed. They're trying their best, and the last thing he needs to do is make them more upset. Mom can barely go two days without crying, and Dad almost never leaves the lab at this point. Danny should be trying to make their lives easier, not trying to make it worse.

Plasmius says that, as the child, it's not his job to *take care of* his parents. To that, Danny says, what would he know? He's some weird entity, he doesn't have a clue as to what human families are like. This is normal. Sam's parents are always berating her and trying to control her, and Tucker's parents are always throwing him in front of a television so they don't have to deal with him. Heck, even Dash comes to school with a few black eyes. Everyone goes through this.

It could be worse.

"But it could also be better," chides Plasmius, who's following behind Danny on the boy's way home from school.

"Stop that," snaps Danny in a whisper, not wanting to gain the attention of his older sister. Jazz already worries so much about him, squawks like a mother hen when he's anywhere *near* danger. If he

even does so much as cough, she's thinking he's ill with the flu. Danny figures it's some kind of coping mechanism, being that their parents aren't well enough to do such things, she feels the need to step in and take care of him because no one will take care of her.

You won't catch Danny admitting that he read that dumb psychology book she got him, though. No need to make her head any bigger.

Shrugging, his supernatural companion responds, "Perhaps I wouldn't read your thoughts if you didn't think so loud."

"Or, you know, if you had a sense of privacy," mumbles the boy.

With a chuckle, Plasmius shakes his head. "My dear boy, if I had the option, I would not be reading your mind at all. Pubescent boys can be so...vulgar. You know I can't control it."

That is true. According to the man, the nature of his job essentially ties him to Danny entirely. At all times, the man can read his vitals, feel his heartbeat, and sense when he is distressed.

Unfortunately, when Danny's even the *tiniest* bit upset, his ever so paranoid guardian is immediately fishing into his thoughts to find the cause. Because for whatever reason, Plasmius thinks Danny will run off and drink bleach the moment the guy isn't watching.

"It's simply in my nature. Beings like me aren't made with trust in mind," luckily, Plasmius actually seems frustrated by this fact. While the older male does value Danny's opinion above anyone else's, he still doesn't quite trust the boy. Something to do with how Plasmius died and the kind of creature he is. He tries, he really does, but anything involving Danny having a poor mental state is just something that Plasmius is *terrified* of, and he won't let Danny know why.

"Some things are better left unsaid, little badger."

"Danny? You okay?" Jazz frowns at him, having slowed down her walking to be side by side with him.

"Yeah," he answers, because what else can he tell her? That his dumb not-ghost friend won't stop helicopter parenting him? That any worry she doesn't have, Plasmius does, effectively making him the most sheltered child alive? Anything he could say would make her psychoanalyze him to death. How many mental illnesses has she already diagnosed him with? Hearing that he's got some invisible entity following him around would give her a field day!

His answer isn't enough for her; it almost never is. She pouts, obviously not happy that her little brother won't open up to her. Then, her eyes light up, and it makes him smile because she looks like Dad back when he would get so easily joyous. "Hey, I've been saving up for a while. We should stop for ice cream!"

"Won't Mom be upset that we aren't arriving home on time?" Sure, *Jazz* can come home whenever she wants. Her grades are phenomenal, her chores are always done, and she's great in every way that Danny isn't. Jazz will always be the better sibling, the more loved sibling. Nothing he can do will make his mother look at him the way she looks at Jazz.

"You don't need her, you have *me,"* Plamius soothes, but of course, a being that doesn't have a mother wouldn't understand the overwhelming *need* for one.

That thought makes Plasmius frown deeply, and Danny is immediately thinking of apologizing as soon as possible.

Slinking her arm around her brother's shoulders, Jazz says, "Don't worry, you're with me! We'll just tell her you were helping me in the library."

Maybe this time, she'll actually buy it, Danny's thoughts snort, and Plasmius rubs little circles into his palm. Knowing the man is likely still in his head, he thinks, *thank you,* calming at the pleasant energy Plasmius radiates.

"Anything for my sunshine," teases the older man, as the trio enters a white and red painted ice cream parlor.

No one could stop Vlad from leaving the hospital. Gaining the ability to turn completely invisible is quite helpful for escaping the clutches of morbidly curious doctors. Flight is something he's had more trouble with, but he's been secretly mastering these powers over the past few months so that his leave would go as perfectly as possible.

His desperate need to get ***away*** *takes him to a field, legs stumbling like a newborn fawn when he lands . When was the last time he saw the sun, felt the grass on his feet? It feels like forever ago, breeze gently blowing through his outgrown hair, the sky fading into red as the sun slowly sets.*

Beyond the stretch of yellow, hiding behind a large tree, is a figure. Long black hair dangles to her knees, a set of piercing red eyes locking on to his. Dizziness overcomes him as she works her way closer, an air of confidence and wonder following close behind. She tilts her head to the side as she considers him, eyes cold, with miniscule pity joining that cruelty.

"You've got a fire in you," she tells him, circling Vlad like a vulture, "a raging desire, a hunger. You've been hurt, and the only way you could nurse such a wound is to give it to those who put it there."

The woman, who is by no means a human, reads him like a book. Though, something tells him, perhaps the ghost inside of him, that she isn't like him. She is not a spirit, he's been able to feel them when they come near, know when they're around. This creature is something entirely different.

"I can grant your wish, pitiful man," cold fingers touch underneath his chin, "are you willing to pay the price for such a thing?"

Snarling, all the hate and pain he's felt for so many months claw their way up his spine. "I wish for revenge on Jack and Maddie. I don't care how you do it, but I want to be the cause of their fall, I want to destroy them, to slowly drive them mad and rip them limb from limb. I wish to take everything they love from them, I wish steal back what has been taken from me!"

Purple lips spread into a sadistic smile. "Very well. Your wish is my command, and from this day forward..." Her caress of his jaw turns to a clutch, nails digging into skin, "you will work for ***me,*** *in exchange for your petty revenge."*

Eyes roll back into his skull and despite the ground being underneath him, Vlad feels himself falling.

Down,

Down,

Down.

Notes for the Chapter:

> And now we have Desiree, because she's p r e t t y and I love her. Very efficient of her, to disguise her deal-making as wish making, so she can hide under the guise of a genie ghost. Smart lady ;).

Chapter 6

Summary for the Chapter:

> Mother's day doesn't go well, and Vlad isn't too keen on letting anyone hurt his Daniel.

Notes for the Chapter:

> Unfortunately, I am too sleepy to provide you with my silly little rants. I really should stop updating at 10:00 pm

The portal is coming closer to being done. Jack's been working on it nonstop, though, without her there, he hasn't made much progress. Every time Maddie manages to get herself around to helping him out, they end up fighting again. Her husband will leave the lab with a new set of bruises and she'll crumble to the floor shame of what she's become.

Jazz has told her she should go to therapy. How can she? They'd never believe what she's done. Anyone who heard her say that she sold her son's soul to a wishing ghost in exchange for the erasure of how she'd *destroyed* a man's life would call her mad! They'd lock her in a nut house, people already think her and her husband to be looney!

And it's not like she can talk to Jack. Her wish altered the memories of everyone around her, making Jack think Vlad had just...up and commit suicide. Without any warning, he was just gone, and their proto portal had disappeared with him. To everyone around her, the accident never happened, and her avoidance for her son was caused by post-pregnancy depression, not an overwhelming sense of guilt she gains when she's around him.

Her poor, innocent baby boy, will disappear one day. Not only is it all her fault, but she has the audacity to treat him like scum for her *own* mistake. She can't help herself; if ehe doesn't bring herself to become attached to the child, maybe it won't hurt as much when he leaves. What does a ghost want with Danny's soul, anyway? To turn him into it's evil minion?

His love for that *stupid song* doesn't help, either. Every time she hears it, she swears she's going to see the corpse of the man she killed laying right next to her son. On her life, she swears it isn't Danny who sings those awful lyrics- that voice is too familiar in a terrifying way. Too deep, too silky and loving. It doesn't sound like the ghost she'd sold her son to, either. No, that voice could only belong to *Vlad.*

Spectral creatures cannot enter the Fenton home. This place has a constant ghost shield up, has an alarm, and is filled to the brim with gear that could destroy one at any second. While she's only seen two or three in her life time, with the ghost portal so close to being done, weaponry is needed for anything they might encounter because of it.

So, there's absolutely no way it's a ghost she hears singing softly to her son after she's ordered him to stay in his room. Maybe some...powerful creature is using Vlad's voice to get close to her boy. Perhaps something related to that wishing ghost. Maddie doesn't know, and honestly, it's not like she's going to do anything to stop it. There's no way she can; Danny's life was gone the moment that ghost granted her wish. All she can do now is sit and wait for him to be taken.

Years passed, and now, she's starting to feel on edge with every second. Maddie hadn't been given an exact date as to when she would lose her son, just that, one day, he would be gone. She tried so hard to avoid having a child all together; Jazz had been an accident, but upon hearing that she would be a daughter, Maddie happily birthed her and raises her as any other mommy would.

Danny is a downright impossibility. She had her tubes tied, was on birth control. There's no way she could've gotten pregnant, yet, here he is. A thirteen year old boy, who doesn't know the horrid fate waiting for him.

As he approaches her with a wrapped box in hand, she feels her stomach twist in anguish. Her mind is fighting for a reaction, wondering if she should scream, cry, or laugh. Danny's lip is between his teeth, eyes nervous. No son should look so scared come near his mother, but she supposes it's only right. She hasn't been much of a mother to him anyway.

"Happy Mother's day, mom," he says, that sweet, pure smile twitching nervously on his face. The box is placed in front of her, it's wrapping that same teal she wears nearly every day. Maroon goggles hang around her neck, nothing to obscure the discomfort that jumps into her violet eyes when her own son gets too close.

What's left of her conscience orders her to take the gift, to open it with a polite yet forced smile like she does every year and thank him as he walks away. No one is here this time to enforce that; Jazz is out, picking up breakfast while Jack is...hell, she doesn't know where

her husband is. Honestly, she's glad he isn't home. He's safer away from her.

An ugly thing rears it's head, sending a glare to the present sitting in front of her. After hating herself for so long, it's hard not to loathe her son in turn. If he just hadn't been born, everything would've been fine. She and Jack would still be hopelessly in love, with their wonderful little girl at their sides. They'd take trips to the mall without dead weight staggering behind them, could eat dinner without feeling like judging eyes are glued to the backs of their skulls.

It's so much easier to hate someone other than yourself.

Jaw setting, she lifts the box, not even giving it a little shake before she dumps it in the trash. Danny flinches when she passes by him with a shove, marching upstairs and locking the bathroom door behind her. Breaths come heavy, shaky, and the lights above her flicker slightly.

Why can't Danny just- stay away from her? She's shown more than enough times that she's not a good mother. He should be afraid of her, hate her. Hope shouldn't be what he's holding when he's near her, a deep, needing for her to parent him like she should. She *can't.* He's not her's, she gave him away long ago.

Water splashes into the tub, filling it up as she strips. A bath will

calm her nerves. Getting all worked up will only make things worse, especially if Danny decides to press further like he has so many times. He needs to learn to stay away; she doesn't have the self-control to...to keep from hurting him.

Jack is proof of that. Where Danny will cave and hide, Jack always follows her. Loving, understanding. A puppy begging to be pet. All he gets is burned as a result, the fire within her that captivates him not bringing warmth but scorching hot injury. The only reason she hasn't left is because she's afraid Jack won't be able to take it if she does, and then the kids will be all alone. Things will be worse than they are now.

Thank goodness, the children take night showers. Cold baths do no good for relaxing.

Steam fogs the mirror. Condensation drips from the showerhead, and she frowns at her reddened skin. It's getting harder to take in breaths, so she figures she must've added too much hot water, even if it felt fine when she stepped in before.

Hissing, she yanks her hand away from the faucet. Her fingers are throbbing with pain, her legs are now screaming as she tears herself out of the bath. Heated mist rises from the boiling tub, and there's no way this is just *too much hot water.* Her hands wrap around the knob of the door despite it causing her to grit her teeth-

Nothing happens. Yanking, twisting, *nothing* will open the jammed door. Water rushes into the bathtub, from the pipes she hadn't been touching at all. Screams slip past her lips as the floor is slowly covered in bubbling water; instinctively, she jumps to get away from the pain, causing her to slip and bash her forehead into the knob.

Just before Danny can race to help her, the door swings open violently, and water stops pouring all together. The carpet is soaked in water, and her son is standing, jaw dropped at the sight of his mother collapsed on the ground, skin raw and breaths ragged.

But as he reaches down to offer her a hand, she scrambles away, knowing in her soul that somehow, this is related to *him.* And the boy who had previously been worried sick hardens, swallows, and spins on his heel. She watches him leave, gripping the towel that covers her body with white knuckles.

He's so tiny. That's all Vlad can think as he lays eyes on the boy, little Daniel Fenton. An infant, barely a few days old. So fragile, so vulnerable.

To think Maddie, of all people, would sell her son's soul for business related success is baffling. Even after all she did to him, he still held how that deep down, she has a heart of gold . That she had simply been

corrupted by Jack in some way, and he needed to save her.

However, he finds himself being able to believe such a delusion even less than he did before as he watches his newest assignment sleep peacefully. Not only has she given an innocent child to a demon, signed him to be eaten once Desiree decides his soul is ripe enough, but she's swept Vlad's own tragedy under the rug. No one knows the truth of what happened to him, of how she and her husband hospitalized him.

Desiree's wish granting made the public believe he had fallen ill out of nowhere and commit suicide after being told what he supposedly had was terminal. Maddie effectively erased his pain, is hiding from the truth. If Jack Fenton is an idiot who's stupidity can only be a danger to others around him, Maddie Fenton is a ***monster*** *who's inability to take responsibility for her actions will ultimately be the death of this child. Vlad sees that, now.*

It's a shame, honestly, that Daniel has to die this way. Most of those Vlad is assigned to are people who honestly deserve to be damned to hell . Shady business owners who are far too eager to strike up a deal with a red eyed, suit wearing, power holding demon. Ghosts who's obsessions get the better of them, leading them to become his eternal employers, lest they want to be eaten as well. Such stupid things they are, not even bothering to read the contracts he gives them before scrawling their name upon the blood red, dotted line at the bottoms.

Baby Daniel didn't do any of thay. His life was gone before he'd even been conceived, an egg and sperm amongst many, cursed to a life that could only end horribly. It's not fair, that the Fentons have been blessed with such an adorable little angel, one that they've clipped the wings from.

Pudgy, flushed fingers wrap around his own as the infant begins to fuss. He hushes the whimpering thing, lifting it into his arms. Oh, poor, dear Daniel. Really, he wishes his revenge didn't have to be linked to Daniel's downfall. Or, more so, he yearns to have been in Desiree's place. If only he had known Maddie would be looking to make a deal that night, then he could've have asked for her son. Daniel would've been his to swoop away the minute he'd been born.

Eyes glowing with intensity, he brings that fuzzy head to his lips, whispering promises that might get himself erased. "I'll find a way, Daniel," he swears, because there's a connection between himself and this child. Both of them have been casted to hell by the Fentons, and he'd rather end up banished to nothingness than end up alone without someone who shares his sadness. Daniel will know his pain, will need Vlad to care for him, to confide in him. He ***needs*** *Daniel, and Daniel needs him.*

Notes for the Chapter:

Poor Danny and Vlad. They both got fucked over in the end.

Chapter 7

Summary for the Chapter:

> Vlad tries to convince Daniel to see things his way, and has a conversation with Spectra.

Notes for the Chapter:

> I watched Hocus Pocus for the first time today. It was funny, but that's honestly the only good thing I have to say about it.

"Tell me about that one," Plasmius points up to the sky, the glittering lights of stars above their heads.

Memories of when the man would take him flying, when Danny was a child who would happily reach for the stars fill his mind. Plasmius would scoop him up again in a heartbeat if he asked, would take him far, far away from this house if he were to mention it. But...Danny *can't* leave. This is his home, where Sam and Tucker are. Dad and Jazz need him to stay, wouldn't be able to cope if suddenly, Danny were to go missing.

Plasmius shifts uncomfortably, and the boy years to ask why. Most questions are answered by his helpful, educative guardian. However, there are a handful that Plasmius' lips are sealed to, and often times they revolve around the creature himself. Though, it probably has to do with the fact that Danny isn't feeling too well right now, which usually means Plasmius is reading his thoughts.

"Go on, Daniel. Bedtime is soon," urges his friend, who's combing fingers through Danny's hair. He's trying so hard to comfort the boy, who's mind is continuously wandering to his mother. When he was small, they were so close. Mom could even have been seen as over protective back then, especially when it came to the topic of ghosts. Despite his parents wanting so badly for Jazz to take over their business one day, Mom put down a firm foot and said that Danny is *not* to have anything to do with specters.

Scoffing, the child rolls over onto his side. She probably just thinks him to be too stupid to get involved with Fenton Works. He would've taken a helicopter mom over the one that loathes his very existence any day, but he supposes he has Plasmius for that kind of stuff.

"Daniel, do not make me smother you, because I will if you do not start talking," his older companion is now pinching his cheek, pouting with very real worry hidden behind his pupilless eyes.

Of course, Danny decides to be a brat, because taunting Plasmius is one of his favorite hobbies. The boy sits upright and crosses his arms, turning his nose away from the horned creature.

Vlad resists the urge to chuckle. It's honestly adorable, the ways Daniel will seek attention from him. If he could somehow find the magic words to get it through the boy's skull that Daniel *doesn't* have to act out, even in minor ways, if he wants Vlad to hold him, he would say them. But he knows that such a concept is confusing to Daniel, who's been taught that if he isn't getting into trouble, his parents won't give him the time of day.

As upsetting as that is, Vlad can shamelessly admit that he selfishly enjoys such a thing. Why should he have to share his little badger with people who don't deserve Daniel's presence? For now, Daniel is his, and he *will* be finding a way to keep it that way. His employer may not like it, but Vlad always gets what he wants, and if he says Daniel belongs to *him,* it means that Daniel is his and his alone.

Two strong arms wrap around the boy's waist and pull him into Vlad's embrace. Daniel is immediately making a show of struggling- "Quit cuddlin' me, touch-starved fruitloop,"- not actually putting much effort into the act. Vlad easily takes the child's chin between his index finger and thumb, forcing him to look his way, so that Vlad may pepper that positively cute, disgruntled face in firm kisses.

"Gaaah, stop it, you dweeb!" Daniel giggles, pressing his hands to Vlad's face and shoving. Vlad has no intention of obeying, until...

Coughs, Daniel breaks out into a fit of coughs. His skin has been paler recently, and he's looked slightly more tired, but Vlad has shrugged most of it off. With those family issues, he can't expect Daniel to be too energetic. Adding the fact that Vlad needs to feed off of human energy to survive on Earth, he thought the boy to just be feeling frail. Vlad tries to stick to feeding off of the other Fentons for energy, plus those people at his work when he's in his human disguise, but when no one else is around, Daniel is all he can turn to.

Luckily, being only *half* of a demon makes him only really need half

the energy a demon needs to sustain itself. Which is why he's able to last so long just eating energy itself and not consuming souls like most other demons do. Beings like Spectra would feed off of negative energy, bringing out the worst in people, until she can ultimately drive them into suicide or make them weak enough that they're an easy kill. Then, she'd eat the soul that's left, and move on.

Vlad, of course, doesn't need to eat souls as a hybrid. After all, you wouldn't see half ghosts going around eating other ghosts- well, there's feeders who swallow ectoplasm, but that's another thing entirely.

But now, with Daniel hacking so violently and his skin feeling warm...is the boy getting sick? His vitals aren't too bad, but they could be better. "Come along, it's too cold for you out here," Vlad scoops up the child, plan forming in his head. Bed, medicine, soup, and lots of water.

"Plasssss, m'fineeee," whines Daniel as he's carried into his room and tucked beneath sheets.

"You can't lie to the person who can literally read your vitals at all times, Daniel. You have the beginnings of a fever, most likely stress induced. Wait here while I get you some medicine." It *has* to be from stress. They have four years left, there's no way this could be connected to Madeline's wish.

Before he can head off to grab some Nyquil, a small head shoots out and grasps on to his cape. Vlad's never liked this form, the one that mimicks his ghost form. Spirits are so silly looking, but if he's to be tricking the Fentons into seeing him as a dastardly specter, he can't exactly be walking around in his usual appearance, can he? Things would get quite problematic if someone were to catch wind of demon's existence.

"Why does Mom hate me?"

Oh, if only he could answer such a question. Vlad dreams of the day that he can tell Daniel all the awful things his parents have done, to see his darling child loathe the Fentons as much as Vlad does. If not for selling his soul to Desiree, the man-eating demon who presents herself as a wishing ghost, then for what they've done to his guardian. To see Daniel be protective of him, to long harm upon the people who took his life away, would be the most raw, true act of love Vlad can think of...

All in due time, though. "It doesn't matter her reason, nothing will ever justify the way she treats you." Vlad kneels to be eye level with his dear, "You don't need her, Daniel. You don't need these people, they don't deserve someone as special as you."

"I know," responds the boy, though Vlad knows he's lying. "You're gonna sing for me when you get back, right?"

"Of course," Sadly, he gives Daniel's knobby shoulder a tight squeeze. "You know I love you, little badger. More than anything or anyone." The boy's gotten to that age, where he's full of embarrassment over stupid things and feeling like he needs to grow up so quickly. He only ever asks for the song anymore if he's truly upset.

Sleepily, Daniel murmurs, "I love you too, Plasmius," just as Vlad is leaving.

Bed, medicine, soup, and lots of water. Then, Vlad will check in with his supervisors, and speak to his own employees about the progress on the portal. Once it's complete, Vlad will be working towards gaining full reign of the human world. Because, well...

Why stop with having *just* the ghost zone in the palm of his hands? He needs as much power as he can get, if he wants to challenge ownership of the boy's soul. And with the amount of chaos releasing several ghosts into the human world would create, Vlad would surpass his employer in power in no-time. In fact, she's lucky he's been pretending for so long. A mere deal-maker like her is *nothing* compared to a person who has taken the title of Ghost King.

All he has left to do is to claim Daniel, and kill the remaining Fentons.

Other than Jasmine, of course, a voice inside of his head scolds. *Daniel likes the girl. We can't upset Daniel by killing her, but if she gets in the way...a little accident wouldn't be your fault.*

Shaking his head, he mutters to himself, "No, he would never forgive me if I let anything happen to her." Even if he hates that he has to share, his darling's happiness matters most to him. Vlad still needs to convince Daniel that is parents aren't worthy of saving, and considering that such a task is proving to be harder than it should, he doubts he'd ever succeed in turning the boy against Jasmine. He can just hope she won't be an obstacle when the time comes.

"You know, Desiree doesn't usually work with men," Penelope Spectra comments, eyes on her well manicured claws. Unfortunately, this is one of the few times Vlad has had to spend in her presence, and he's already hating it. "She considers them only good for a meal. Especially your kind."

"My kind?" Vlad waves off Fright Knight, not bothering to give Spectra his full attention . If there's one demon Vlad truly hates, it's her. She's caused more than enough problems for him as is, being as he's had to scare her away from ***his*** *Daniel. She can feed off of any other little brat for all he cares, but him telling her no, she may not cause misery on his child and assignment, has caused her to become a thorn in his side .*

Those red lips of her's open to reveal sharp, glittering teeth, red eyes glinting with an emotion that would make another's skin crawl. All it causes for Vlad is disgust; Spectra is a bottom feeder, far too weak to harm him. He loathes having to share an employer with her, but Desiree

won't get rid of her. The wishing demon doesn't often employ men, after all, and she's highly unlikely to listen to anything one has to say. It's in Vlad's best interests to feign submission, if he wants to be able to catch her off guard in the future. "Ones that seek power, ones that ***have*** *power. It makes her feel threatened. Men aren't the type to take women seriously, after all."*

Oh, Vlad takes Desiree very seriously. It's not that he thinks she is weak, or that he doesn't respect her. She's been doing her job well for years, even if she is just a middle class demon. Vlad wouldn't have all the power he has if it weren't for her, and for that, he will be eternally grateful.

It's just that she happens to be toying with ***his*** *possession. Vlad can respect and acknowledge the woman's strengths while having a problem with her. If Desiree were to give up on dear Daniel's soul, a child who's not going to give her much outside of a light snack, then Vlad would be perfectly fine with leaving her be. But because it was him who asked, her only male employee, she's become unnecessarily stubborn over the matter. That damn grudge of her's is getting in his way.*

Where ghosts have obsessions, demons have grudges. Vlad being both, is a nightmare to deal with.

"Why do you bow to her, anyways?" Spectra leans forward, resting her chin on her hands. "You're far higher on the food chain than her now. She considers you valuable, but threat. You could very well ruin her within seconds- you've destroyed Pariah Dark, taken over the ghost zone, and have made yourself one of the most powerful demons to exist. Why let her boss you around?"

*To put it simply, it's easier that way. And he doesn't **want** to have to kill her. Desiree is a nice lady to be around, despite her hatred of men. Honestly, she's justified in her loathing, it's just unfair that she hasn't grown to trust him even the slightest, after he's proven to her time and time again that he's a loyal worker. If he has to erase her, he will, but he'd rather become an equal in her eyes. Maybe it has something to do with his mother.*

He misses her. She was afraid when he showed up, but he can't quite blame her for that. If some horned, sharp toothed creature were to pop into your living room claiming to be your son, you'd be a bit more than startled.

*Well, if Daniel had done that to him, Vlad would be more concerned and excited, but that doesn't count. He **is** a demon, he has nothing to fear. His mother, on the other hand, damn near had a heart attack. Once he has Daniel with him, he should introduce the two of them. She likes children. Maybe it'll help ease her into things.*

"That," Vlad drawls, bored of her shoving her nose into places it doesn't belong, "is none of your business. And frankly, it's quite rude of you to ask."

"People might think you're going soft, taking orders from someone like her," Spectra muses, raising her brows .

Shrugging, he says, "If they wish to underestimate me, so be it. It's not my problem if they lose their heads due to their own stupidity."

For two days, Spectra doesn't show up for check-in. She looks worse for wear when she does, hair a mess and bags under her eyes . An ugly, deep scar is on her throat, one she attempted to hide with makeup. It's not often a demon acquires an injury that isn't able to be healed perfectly, so she gets quite the eyeballing from her employer. Desiree notes that she's been avoiding Vlad, but doesn't reprimand him. Not many demons care about the safety of their employees, unless they're actually worth something.

Notes for the Chapter:

> That's right! Spectra is also a demon! And Vlad is half ghost, half demon. He lost his humanity when he made a deal with Desiree.
>
> I wonder how things will turn out with her...
>
> Not how you think, I can assure you.

Chapter 8

Summary for the Chapter:

Jack can't figure out how to fix the portal, and Vlad has an important discussion with Desiree.

Notes for the Chapter:

Me @ Vlad: baby boy, baby

Me, also @ Vlad: e v i l

Anyways im tired as fuck, i meant to upload this earlier but the scene with desiree took me a while. im not used to writing her.

"Dad?"

The eldest Fenton is, again, working relentlessly in the basement. Papers are scattered around him, his pencil thumping stressfully against his temple. Dark brows are pushed together, nose scrunched up, as he mumbles to himself, frustrated. Dad was always more of the handy-man; he did a lot of the building, while mom did the actual mathematics of the stuff.

However, Mom isn't exactly...up for working, as of late. Leaving Dad to fumble about with the portal alone. Danny walis closer to the man hunched over by the lab counter. "Dad?" The larger ravenette can't

hear him, too focused on his work.

"Gotta, gotta get this done..." Dad mutters, eyes darting between his papers and the portal. He needs a break; if the stained up jumpsuit and unbrushed teeth don't say it, then his jittery hands and the amount of empty energy drink cans do.

Placing a hand on the adult's shoulder, causing Dad to practically jump ten feet in the air, Danny repeats himself. "Dad."

"Oh, hey, Danny-boy!" Dad significantly calms at the sight of his son, though that smile he has isn't as bright as it once was. "Somethin' ya need, kiddo?"

The child shifts on his feet, uncomfortable at the sight of a long, angry scratch down the side of his father's face. Mom is pretty strong, but Dad's even *more* so. She can't lay many lasting injuries on him, and he always covers up the ones that she does. It's harder to pretend everything is okay when the evidence is sitting right in front of you. "Wanna come play *Mortal Combat* with me? Or...uhm, we can watch *Poltergeist,* a-and you can tell me how inaccurate and dumb it is!"

All of that translates to, *I'm seriously worried about your health, please take a break.* Dad looks away, smile frozen and eyes downcast. "Sorry, Dan-o. Maybe after dinner."

"Come on, Dad, you haven't left the lab in three days." He tugs on the man's orange hazmat suit, "You've gotta give your brain a rest."

"Can't," his father stands up, turning his back to Danny. He opens one of the computers, putting in the password that Danny knows is his parent's anniversary. Dad put it as that after forgetting one too many times; Mom cried the fourth year in a row, and Dad felt horrible. It wasn't intentional, Jack Fenton would never do anything malicious on purpose. But it still caused her pain, so he did what he could to force himself to remember.

Maybe he should go to a doctor, get his memory problems check out. Jazz says she thinks he has ADHD, but Dad doesn't trust doctors, so that's not happening. "Once I finish this portal, your mom can stop being so stressed all the time. Everything will go back to normal." Dad sounds like he's trying to convince himself as much as he's trying to convince Danny.

The boy twiddles his thumbs, shoulders sagging. It's selfish, Dad has more to worry about then spending time with some dumb kid. Danny's not smart enough to be useful in the lab and help him finish that portal that's taking all his time away from his kids. He shouldn't be putting even more on his shoulders by demanding attention from him like some whiney toddler.

Vlad watches Daniel leave, unaware he'd been observing silently the entire time. Jack drops his head into his hands, thick fingers rubbing at his temples. Mantra filling the stale air, *"Gotta get this done, gotta..."* scribbling at his incorrect calculations with a frustrated groan.

Mixed emotions aren't something the hybrid is fond of. Anger, because this man has brushed his child off for the umpteenth time in favor of doing he thinks will please Maddie, but won't. Pity, because Jack's so hellbent on trying to fix the wife that beats him that his own health doesn't matter to him anymore. Then hatred again, because Jack refuses to see how this is all effecting Daniel.

Still, his ex best friend who he knew to be optimistic to the point of extremity having such empty looking eyes inst exactly an easy sight to see. Jack is teetering on the edge of a cliff, waiting for that gentle gust of wind to blow him off into the deep end. Vlad can only hope Daniel will not be around to witness such a thing. His mother's downfall was hard enough on him.

With a huff, while Jack isn't looking, he fixes the math work and is off to join his little badger upstairs.

Jack spends the entire rest of the day staring at his dead friend's handwriting, trying with futility to make sense of it all.

"Desiree, I need to speak with you."

Long, black hair flows as the sickly green skinned woman turns to greet her employee, displeased to be disrupted. Preparing for another trip to the human world, Vlad guesses, by the satchel she's got slung over her arm.

"Then talk," Desiree says, folding her arms. "Do not waste my time."

"You know I won't," Vlad says, and he can thankfully pin the acceptance in her eyes. Even with her prejudice, she recognizes Vlad as a professional. He does not dilly dally.

Arms falling to her sides, she tilts her chin upward. "This is about the boy, isn't it?"

"Yes," Vlad is sure to keep himself as cool as possible during this conversation. Wouldn't want the girl to know the war that's raging on within him, of fear and anger and planned ways to rip her head from her shoulders if she dares keep Daniel away from him.

"You've grown attached to him," Desiree sits, not bothering to look at him . She plucks a brush from her vanity, running it through her silky strands of midnight hair. "Such a thing isn't common of you, Vlad."

More like, such a thing hasn't happened with him at all. One of Desiree's previous employees fell for a young man she'd been assigned to collect. That girl was erased shortly after pleading her case, and Desiree ravished the man's soul more violently than Vlad had ever seen . It's one of the many reasons Vlad makes a point ***not*** *to befriend coworkers. "I'm aware."*

"Yet here we are," she sighs, running her elegant fingers along the brush's bristles. "Tell me, why should I let you have him?"

To say he's surprised would be an understatement. She's not asking him why she shouldn't attempt to swallow the soul that she technically owns, the humanity he gave to her in exchange for his powers. Vlad may not be human anymore, but his humanity still very much exists within her hold, and if she were to consume it, he would resemble the lowest of all demons. Those animalistic creatures who live only to cause chaos, who're void of personality and the ability to love.

Even Daniel wouldn't be safe if she were to do such a thing. Vlad is confident in his ability to end her before she can do so, but it's still a noteworthy risk. "He's a mere child. Innocent. All he would be to you is a snack, wouldn't even give you too much of a power boost."

"Many of the people I've eaten are such," Desiree sets the brush down, now

making eye contact with him. She observes him for a while, taking in the sight before her. Reading him. "You know where petty things such as love will get you, Plasmius ," she stands, never taking her eyes from him as she comes closer, "your love for Jack took your life, and your love for Madeline took your trust. Do you really think this boy, their son, will be any different?"

*"He is not theirs, he is **mine,**" Vlad snaps, "I am confident that he would never hurt me if he could help it."*

*Cruelly smiling, she takes him by the collar, yanking him down. "And when he grows up? He will want a family, a lover, one who might not be you. You will have to learn to share. Are you willing to give him up to someone else, who you **know** will not cherish him like you do?"*

"If it will make him happy, yes." As much as his heart aches when he says it, he truly means the statement. Vlad will be whatever Daniel needs him to be, may it be a father, a friend, or a partner. If Daniel is to yearn for another, Vlad will swallow his jealousy an allow it. He's done so for years now, with that Jasmine girl and Miss Manson and Mister Foley.

That smile of her's falls instantly, ruby eyes searching for the lies on his tongue. Finding none, she steps back, face smoothing out to neutrality yet

again. "You're telling the truth."

"I wouldn't lie on such an important matter, Desiree." Unless it were to help him gain Daniel, but telling his employer a fib during such a sensitive topic would only anger her.

"And if you're wrong? If he ends up like his parents and hurts you as well?"

He's considered the topic, frequently in Daniel's early years. As protective as he always has been over the child, he's been just as defensive of himself. To be crushed like that again...Vlad couldn't handle it. "It's a risk I'm willing to take. If such an occurrence is to arrive, then I will eat him just as you would have." And he truly means it, too. While he's absolutely certain Daniel will ***never*** *harm him like Jack or Maddie did, he will not take someone attempting to very lightly. To eat Daniel would be one of the most painful things he can imagine, but at least that way, he could have him forever. And no one would hurt Vlad* ***ever*** *again.*

He's waiting for her to dismiss him, to tell him she'll assign another to his job. Preparing to tear her ribcage open with his bare hands and consume the bitter soul that is Desiree, man-eater, demonic deal maker disguised as a genie ghost.

The time never comes. "Fine. Don't you dare ask me for anything ever again."

"What?"

"You heard me. Now go. The little brat needs you."

Notes for the Chapter:

> Like i said...it wasnt gonna turn out the way you thought.
>
> What, you really think desiree is gonna fight about eating a CHILD? with a demon she knows can demolish her, but chooses to remain on civil grounds instead? hell no. if anything she's just hoping she gets to say "i told you so" when danny breaks his heart which will never happen, i can promise u that)

Chapter 9

Summary for the Chapter:

Danny experiences death for the first time.

Notes for the Chapter:

Well, now you know why Desiree said what she said. Danny's finna... Unalive. Only half way, though. Don't worry, he'll walk it off.

This.

Stupid.

Portal.

Danny's birthdays were never anything special, and dwindled in celebration over the years. All he asks for is a little extra attention for *one* day. Is that really ao much to ask?

Apparently, because that fucking portal not working has his dad gone from the house and his mother drunk in the living room. Jazz is upstairs crying; she tried and failed to talk Mom into therapy again. This time, the woman actually gor *violent* with Jazz, an occurrence that's quite rare. She didn't do much, backhanded her, but Danny knows that even the tiniest hit can shatter the soul when it comes from someone you trusted to protect you.

When it failed to start up, Mom had stormed up the lab doors and slammed them shut. They'd been working so hard on it for years, and it's proven to be an impossible task. Why is his mother so hellbent on getting into the Ghost zone? To prove that their research is real, that ghosts *do* exist, yeah, but is it really worth working your husband into the ground over?

Sam and Tucker aren't allowed to come over. Those rules were made by their own parents, can tell that the Fenton's are dysfunctional, but couldn't care about children other than their own less. Sam's parents think Danny's a problem child who's a bad influence on their baby, and Tucker's parents...they offer refuge on occasion, but have proven to be as uncomfortable around Danny as everyone else is.

They may or may not have seen him talking to Plasmius and think he's some druggie that'll get Tucker into heroin. Jokes on them, *Tuck* is the one that smokes pot, not Danny. Stuff smells too weird for him, and Plasmius would throw a hissy fit if he ever saw Danny anywhere near *"the devil's lettuce"*.

Back to the topic at hand, Danny's birthday is shitty and he hates it. Not even his invisible guardian is going to be here for most of the day. He's got some weird, important *creature of the darkness* business to attend to. Sure he's promised to take Danny wherever he wants when he gets back, but Danny's still mad about it. This is his day, Plasmius is breathing down his neck literally all the time! Why can't he reschedule a meeting or whatever?

Pouting in his room all day isn't how he wants to spend his time. No, if he's gonna have to feel so pissy, then he's gonna do something about it. Mom's probably gonna come in and rough him up and cry like she does every year on his birthday, he might as well give her a reason to.

Lucky for him, the woman is passed out on the couch. Danny tiptoes into the basement, slowly creeping down the cement steps. Before he decides to mess with the portal that's causing all his distress as of right now, he slips on the white and black hazmat suit his father had made for him. And peels off that sticker of his face- way too tacky looking.

Danny is far from genius. Jazz would be better at figuring this shit out, however, his sister would rather boil her own hand than consider the existence of ghosts. And if he's going to make his family pay attention to him, somehow make Dad have a genuine *smile* again, then he's gonna have to somehow become a child prodigy in two seconds.

Maybe Dad missed something super obvious due to sleep deprivation? Danny approaches the giant, metal device, keeping an eye out for anything he could point out to his father. So far, nothing, so he travels deeper, eventually leading himself inside the portal.

Chills running down his spine, he finds himself backing up towards the wall. Basements *should* be stuffy and hot, not freezing cold. Does it have to do with Mom and Dad's weird ectoplasm stuff?

When he feels something hit his back that's most certainly *not* a wall, and hears the mechanical whirring of danger, Danny freezes. Great. The one day he doesn't have his overprotective guardian breathing over his shoulder, and he's going to die. If he does survive, Plasmius ia going to wrap him in bubblewrap and refuse to let him leave the house, ever.

Right after that thought is a burning sensation akin to fire, electrifying his limbs and sending jolts of pain throughout his body. Screams rip out of his throat, eyes screwed shut and he can *smell* his flesh crisping. Nothing exists other than agony, tears flowing down his face. Where's Plasmius? Why is he alone in this? Mom and Dad left him to die on his birthday. He's fourteen, and he's dying, he's screeching for someone to save him. *Anyone.*

When it's all over, and he's waking from having blacked out, limbs so heavy he can hardly move, all he can think is that Mom couldn't have not heard him. She's just upstairs, why didn't she come down? His mouth tastes of iron, and his limbs are trembling with aftershock.

"Oh, little badger," that voice causes a hoarse whine, searing pain still very much present. Plasmius feels so cool against him, as the man scoops him into his arms. "Shh, you're alright. You're going to be okay."

"Pla- *aaah- sshe..ugh.."* He manages, choking on his sobs.

Rocking the boy, Plasmius brings him close. Lips move against his forehead, murmuring soft reassurances. Danny cuddles into the cradling body further, hiccuping as he clams.

Upstairs, Jazz is bolting towards the basement. What on Earth just happened?! One second the house is damn near silent and the next Danny is screaming bloody murder! Her feet slam against the hallway as her hair whips around her, stairs coming into view, when-

"You are my sunshine,"

A bucket of ice water is dumped over her head, stopping her dead in her tracks. No. She knows that song, the one she'd press her ear to the wall of her baby brother's bedroom and hear late into the night. It...it was dreams, right? Nightmares, created by an imagination that was far too active for her age.

"My only sunshine,

You make me happy,"

With shaking fingers, she latches on to the rail, feet stumbling over the steps of the stairway. Mom is awake, staring vacantly at the TV. No light emits from it.

" When skies are gray,

You'll never know, dear,

How much I love you,"

She follows the singing to the basement door, eyes growing wetter with every passing second. This can't be happening. How does she wake up? The thought to pinch herself passes as she takes in a calming breath, the kind she's seen in youtube videos. In through the nose, out through the mouth.

"Please don't take,

My sunshine away,"

On the basement floor is the monster that haunted her youth. Blue skin, terrifying horns, blood red eyes that pierce into the body in it's arms that could be no one but Danny. She knows her little brother's heart shaped face, his small frame, the faintest freckles that splatter his skin. There's no way it's anyone other than Daniel James Fenton, being held by his childhood *"imaginary"* friend.

"The other night, dear,

As I lay sleeping,

I dreamt I held you,"

Then...where did the white hair come from? Snow's the color, so stark against his burnt skin. Even his hazmat suit is different from the one Dad made, mostly black instead of mostly white. Exhausted, glowing green eyes open to stare up at those scarlet ones and she has the urge to tear her brother away from the creature that her mind is *wailing* will bring nothing but danger.

"In my arms-"

Finally, she's brought out of her funk when a set of rings appear around the child's waist, spreading and changing him back to the appearance she knows so well. *"Danny!"* She cries, launching forward as the spector's eyes widen upon meeting her own.

Before she can get too close, a pink wall appears, her nose slamming right into it. "No, get away from him!" She demands, fists pounding

on the strange forcefield that's appeared. "Mom, mom, help!"

"She's not coming," Danny mumbles so faintly that she almost didn't pick it up. Danny curls further into himself, burying his face into the monster's chest.

Ignoring the comment only because she can't bear to recognize it as true, she shouts, "get away from my brother, you- you *freak!"*

It snarls at her, increasing it's grip on Danny. Clutching him like a feral wolf would. "Go away, Jazz," Danny responds, sound too cold, too barren to be the baby brother that would tease her relentlessly for thinking she's an adult at the age of sixteen.

"Danny-"

"No!" He's standing now, wincing at the pain he's in. The creature places a possessive *(steadyingcalming)* hand on his shoulder, hungry *(worried)* eyes boring into Danny's skull. *(I'mhereI'mhereletmehelpyoupleasebeokaytrustmeIloveyou)* "You- none of you were here! Not you, not Mom, not Dad! I almost died, and- and- if it hadn't been for Plasmius, I would've been alone!"

(NeveraloneI'msosorrypleaseforgivemeIloveyouIloveyou) Jazz blinks, shocked. Today wasn't exactly the greatest and she should've gotten

over herself to give her brother some semblance of a birthday, sure, but she's always been here for Danny! If anything, he's always running away from her advice! He won't *let* her help!

"He's the only one who actually fucking cares about me." Whimpers the boy, falling back into the creature's lap.

"You're wrong," Jazz croaks, placing her hand on the shield, "I- I'm sorry, Danny. I really am." *(Liarleaveusaloneyoukeephurtinghimleavehimalonehes**mine**)*

Danny turns to it, and whispers something into those elf-like ears. Then, it stands with Danny in it's arms, and vanishes.

Daniel stirs in his arms, after having completely passed out once they left Fenton Works. The child coughs, and luckily, there's no blood on the arm that covers his mouth when he does. Vlad tucks his head under his chin, petting his hair, relief washing over the man.

There's no other explanation for what Vlad had just seen. Daniel is like him now. Not entirely, of course, he's still partially human, but

Daniel is a half-ghost. Vlad owns him. This soul, this wonderful boy who's now *like him,* who will need a mentor to help with his powers, is finally, officially *his.*

"What...happened...?" Daniel groans, wiping an exhausted hand over his tired face. Sky blue eyes, jet black hair. Once neon green and white, now cerulean and midnight.

Chuckling down a mixture of both incredible worry and heart racing giddiness, Vlad shifts to give the teen some space. "You fixed the portal, little badger. And, well..." Gesturing to Daniel's foot, which is currently flickering in and out of invisibility, "you half-died, as a result."

"How did I only die *half way?!"* Gawks the boy, jaw dropping when his arm suddenly loses tangibility, causing him to fall forward- though Vlad catches him before he ends up going through the ground.

"Ectoplasm, dear boy." Vlad explains, cautiously checking the burns on Daniel's skin. "It fused with your DNA, keeping you alive. Just as it had for me."

That takes Daniel a couple of minutes to comprehend. One blink, two, then three, and he's blurting, "You- you're not...all the way dead?"

"Technically, no. But I'm not human like you; I got rid of that part of me." Desiree still has his humanity, that much she wouldn't give up. After all, he's a wonderful employee; giving up such a powerful adversary isn't something any smart demon would do.

"Then...what are you?"

This question has been asked time and time again, always being brushed off by Vlad. But now, after years of wanting to tell his tale, to have Daniel know who he is and what his *parents* did to him, he'll finally be able to tell. Someone other than himself and Madeline will know what he's gone through. His story is finally going to be heard.

Notes for the Chapter:

> Don't be too mad at Jazz, she's just freaked out because a literal demon took off with her brother. A demon who has been kind of a dick to her in the past. Shes worried, okay?

Chapter 10

Summary for the Chapter:

Danny and Vlad go to look for Jack.

Notes for the Chapter:

Trying not to update at midnight anymore because it makes my brain wayy too fuzzy when editing. We've hit the first mile stone, (getting Danny's soul from Desire/Danny becoming a halfa) time for the next one.

But I can't tell you what that would be. I'm not gonna spoil the fun ;)

Summer's end is cool in Amity Park. Leaves are already starting to brown, crunching easily beneath Danny's fingers. Quiet fills the air, along with the scent of a nearby restaurant. Smells like pumpkin bread. Danny's mouth waters, wondering if Plasmius- *Vlad,* would be okay with sticking birthday candles in a slice of autumnal goodness.

Vlad is an oddly fitting name for his guardian. He does look quite like a vampire, all posh and stone-faced. He's sitting, mimicking the form of a human, next to Danny in the middle of the woods. Wearing an Armani suit, with long, silver hair tied back into a neat little pony tail. Danny pulls at the baggy material of his hazmat suit, wishing he grabbed something to change into before leaving the house.

He...isn't sure if he wants to go back, though. Not after what he's heard.

Maddie, Mom, the woman who birthed and raised him, gave his soul away to a *demon.* She abandoned her friend in a hospital, doesn't bother to visit his grave or tell her children about the man that *helped* her create a proto portal, then sold her son's soul so that she could erase the consequences of her and Dad's actions.

"Oh, Danny, you should've seen it," Dad muses, thumbing a photo of a large hill he'd taken. "The place was amazing. I swear, I saw a wolf bigger than your sister last time I went."

The seven year old's eyes bulge out of his head, "No way, that's so cool! I wanna go camping, Dad!"

"I'll have to convince your mom to let me take you. Me and V-man once-"

All mirth drops from his father's face instantly. Danny's eyes drift back to the photo book, landing on one of three college students. A young Jack Fenton has his arm slung around the shoulders of a smaller man, who smiles nervously at the camera. Dad slams the book shut, voice cracking as he says, "Why- um, why don't you go heat up some fudge, kiddo?"

At least Dad had the decency to keep those memories of Vlad, instead of trying to get rid of them like Mom. That album was hidden under Danny's baby clothes in the attic, because when Mom happened to find an old gift Vlad had given Dad on his birthday, she lost it on the

man. Danny had never seen his mother so angry; she threw the thing in the oven and burnt it to a crisp, all while throwing things at Dad.

As Vlad explained it, Danny, fortunately, no longer has to worry about his soul being dipped in secret sauce and roasted at medium heat for an hour. Danny trusts his hybrid friend not to turn around and pick an old, fancy wine to have with his dinner of *traumatized teenager*. Why go through the trouble of telling his backstory, protecting Danny like he's fine china, and harassing anyone who dares disrespect Danny, if he's just gonna eat him?

Do souls taste better when they're happier? Is caring for a soul like caring for cattle? Suddenly, Danny's starting to understand Sam's activism a lot more personally than he thought he would.

"Daniel, you are far more important to me than a simple cow. I would rather *you* eat *my* soul than ever have to eat yours, but mine is not on the menu, lest Desiree decides she doesn't want it any longer." Vlad takes Danny's hand into his own, running his thumb along his knuckles. "Though, your energy is delicious. I imagine your soul would be too, which is *exactly* why I'm so protective of you."

And, you know, because your trust was demolished by your best friends and you're afraid of me ever getting as low as you did emotionally, Danny adds, hoping Vlad had stopped reading his mind by then. If he heard it, the hybrid doesn't show it. "What do I taste like?" Danny wouldn't think anything good. He doesn't eat very well, and in that one show, the cannibal guy talks about how preparing humans requires feeding them things like seasoned broth and fine wines.

"Depends on how you're feeling, dear," Vlad presses a kiss to his crown, "your fear is adorably tangy, like oranges."

"Gee, glad my suffering is so tasty," Danny rolls his eyed at Vlad's taunting smirk.

"Well, it's not like I get to taste real food any longer," okay, that's fucking *sad,* "And your happiness is just as lovely. It's...oh, do you remember those fruit-punch popsicles I used to bring you? Like that."

Danny rests his chin on his knees, "How come I taste like fruit to you?"

Vlad shrugs, "Innocents usually do. I've eaten plenty of business men who taste like *fillet mignon,"* gross. Danny can't imagine having to eat other people's energy, and never getting to someone who tastes like pizza or chips. "Your father tastes like pastries, usually."

"Is that why you say stuff like *butter biscuits?"* Danny teases, poking Vlad's side.

"...Where was your father, by the way?"

That's the question Danny's been wondering all day. Dad left early in the morning, claiming to be going out for groceries. It's nearly six, was four when the two left. He should've been home way before Danny had entered the portal.

Standing, the older halfa- Danny is a *halfa* now- stretches. "I suppose we can go look for him, if you'd like. Unless you'd like to do your birthday activities first."

"...Nah, let's look for him. I just wanna be sure he's okay. Mom was kinda hard on him this morning." She's always on edge on Danny's birthday. The boy realizes now that it's because she's reminded of the guilt she brought upon herself.

"He should be checking on *you,"* Vlad grumbles, though he complies, squatting down so that Danny can latch himself on to his back. "We'll have ti teach you how to fly soon."

"I know, I know- wait, I can *fly?!"*

Raising an amused brow, Vlad explains that, of course Danny can fly. He's half ghost, he's going to have *most* of Vlad's powers. Then he's off and into the air, and Danny realizes how long it's been since Vlad's taken him flying. Danny never asks for this kind of stuff anymore, always too scared to come off as childish to the man he looks up to

so.

A dark sky surrounds them, fading into deep reds and oranges near the setting sun. Buildings shoot past them, the people on the street unaware of the two nonhumans soaring above them. Danny leans his head into Vlad's shoulder, eyelids feeling weighed down by boulders. Vlad smells strange. Enticing, almost. Like warm lavender, and...

Underneath it all, *death.* Faint, but still present, hiding behind the walls of scents created by the biological need for a demon to be able to fool humans into trusting it. Lavender oil is used to relax the senses, commonly used as a natural reliever of anxiety and stress. Danny isn't sure if it's the fact that the scent is scientifically proven to relax, or the fact that he associates lavender with the man that has him snuggling into Vlad.

Safe, he decides. This smell makes him feel safe, and loved, and all the things he can't say he feels around other people. Vlad is a demon, one he *knows* is prone to causing harm. May that be because of his protectiveness over Danny, because it's his job to collect souls for that Desiree woman, or because he simply enjoys chaos as any other demon would. Vlad isn' something anyone should take comfort in.

But Danny does. Plasmius has shown him more kindness than any human ever has. And while it may selfishly be only because Danny tells him not to, Vlad refrains from harming in ways that he can control. Eating emotions, energy, is something he cannot. Vlad needs those things to survive. He, however, does not need to send Dash flying down the stairs when he calls him *Fenturd.* Even if he really wants to, he still stops when Danny tells him to.

Vlad may not be safe for others, but he will *always* be a place of solace for Danny. Is it really so bad that he doesn't want to lose such a loving, gentle guardian? At least he's controlling a demon's hellish instincts, rather than letting him run loose and reap havoc. Lord only knows that's what he'd do, if Danny were to be taken from him.

Freezing abruptly, Plasmius' gloved hands tighten where they have their hold on Danny's thighs. The boy squirms, pushing his head forward to get a better look at what his friend has found. Over the large, cloaked shoulder, Danny sees a patch of land covered in headstones. A graveyard, the resting place of many a dead person. Some of the headstones have an array of colorful flowers placed before them, while plenty are left in the shadows.

Vlad shakes his head and continues.

"Yours is probably in Wisconsin, huh?"

"...Yes."

"We could go visit it, some time," Danny doesn't know why asking this makes his stomach flutter and his body automatically bury his face into Vlad's neck, effectively hiding from the man. "I dunno if ghosts are like...fixated on people visiting their grave like in the movies, but. We could bring you flowers."

Vlad hums, leaning his head against Danny's. "If you'd like, we can. It might take us a while to get there, but I can think of some lovely places in Wisconsin you would adore."

At that, Danny's heart does that thing that Vlad always makes it do. Skipping a beat at excitement, with a dash of nervousness there. He supposes it's only natural. Plasmius isn't human, he's going to elicit a sort of...curious, eager response from Danny. The teen just wants to know more about this otherwordly creature, even more so now that the man doesn't have to lie to him.

Because Danny, too, isn't human.

"Daniel, close your eyes."

Pausing, the boy glances up at the horned figure. "What?"

"Close your eyes. We're going home."

"Wait, what are you-" he attempts to look down, but Vlad stops him, turning and bolting away from the scene. "Vlad! Stop!" He's ignored, even as Danny shakes his shoulders.

They stop several miles away from whatever Plasmius had seen, lowering to the ground steadily. Danny stumbles away from the man, frowning defiantly, until he sees...the absolutely *haunted* look in Vlad's scarlet eyes. They look horrified, angry, mixed up in strong emotions that are swirling around in his mind. Danny comes forward, resting a hand on the older halfa's elbow.

"Vlad..." He whispers, trying to calm him. Plasmius is *shaking.* Not from the rage he'd get when Mom would shove Danny to the ground and *scream,* but in *distress.* It's not Danny that needs holding this time, it's Vlad. So he does exactly that, wrapping his arms around that broad chest, nuzzling his face into the ribcage in front of him. "What did you see?"

"I-" Vlad swallows, hand to the back of Danny's head. "I thought I'd be happier," hie voice sounds vacant, confused, "this is what I've wanted for years. *Why aren't I happy?"* Croaks Plasmius, who's knees buckle, causing him to fall.

Danny cups his face, trying desperately to read the expression on it. How could things change so quickly? They were flying, talking about soul-tasting, Wisconsin, and finding Dad-

"I've wanted this for years."

"Why aren't I happy?"

"Vlad." Danny's voice is trembling, losing it's steady hold. "Where's Dad?"

Plasmius' head drops, forehead to Danny's slim shoulder. "I'm sorry..." Murmurs the man, "I'm truly sorry, Daniel."

Notes for the Chapter:

hehe :>

Chapter 11

Summary for the Chapter:

> Past tense is used to describe the final moments of Jack Fenton's life.

Notes for the Chapter:

> Yooo I'm finna...vent a little so skip this paragraph if u wanna.
>
> Hey, I'm updating earlier than I normally do because I feel like garbage and might not update as quickly as normal. My brain just isn't nice to me and I haven't been able to take my mood stabilizers in a while so I'm...a lot more anxious and paranoid than usual. It's messing with my head and really bumming me out, so while I'm gonna try to be active, I might not be updating *every day* anymore.
> But I also might! Who knows anymore. Having no ability to control the swing of your mood kind puts a damper in planning things.
>
> Anyways, wig. Enjoy the angst.

Jack Fenton had always been a poor driver. Maddie normally drove them everywhere, being that Jack's poor attention span would cause them to swerve and him to unknowingly increase the speed. After she started drinking, though, he obviously couldn't let her drive. Sometimes she'd insist, and she'd...insist very forcefully, so Jack would sit in the back with the kids, planning to use himself as a human shield if they were to get into a wreck.

Luckily, Jazz got her driver's license as soon as she possibly could, so Jack had her take the wheel whenever he needed. He didn't get out of the house much, the portal taking up most of his time. Plus, with

Maddie being so unstable, he couldn't leave her alone with the kids. She needed his help to take care of them.

Yes, that's the reason. She needs help. That's why he was terrified of leaving the kide at home alone with her. Not because the last time he had, well...

Valentines Day. Jack had been buzzing the weeks before it, reminding himself constantly of the day coming up. Maddie needed a pick me up, bad, she'd been so much worse lately. He'd find her curled up on the kitchen floor crying apologies, would take her into his arms as she kissed the bruise on his cheek, sobbing that she hadn't meant to. Jack knows that. Maddie loves him, she would never hurt him on purpose, nor the kids. It's just an ***accident .*** *Caused by* ***stress.*** *That's all.*

Now he's got a red velevt cake in the passenger's seat, two bouquets of flowers- tulips for Mads, she's not a fan of roses- and a star-shaped chocolate for Danny. Today will be a day of relaxation and love. The kids are gonna stay at home while Jack takes Maddie out to dinner, and a nice hotel where she can stop thinking about all the things that plague her poor head every day.

Smile wide, he takes his items and struggles with the door. As soon as he's opening it, he's setting everything down as gently as he possibly can while also moving quick, face white as a sheet. Maddie is straddling Danny, both hands clasped around his throat, squeezing so hard her hands are shaking. Her teeth are gritted as she hisses, "Just take him already! Stop toying with me and ***take him!****"*

Jack's booking it towards the two, as the lights begin to grow brighter and brighter until they bust completely. Just as kitchen utensils begin to fly, clattering against walls and denting holes into them, he's yanking his wife off of his son, holding her as she flails and hits and kicks, nervously watching Danny wheeze for air.

A pan slams into Jack's arms, the ones protecting his hysterical wife, and he grits his teeth. Chairs are thrown at the two as Danny, through his pain, hoarsely shouts, "S-top, you're going to kill them!" when knives shoot past Jack's head.

Everything pauses . Jack's eyes follow Danny as he keeps trying to stand, spoons and bowls and plats floating ominously in the air around them. There's a voice murmuring too quietly for Jack to make out, and in his moment of confusion, his arms relax ever so slightly.

Swinging a knife she'd grabbed from the air, Maddie darts forward. Danny screams, arms crossing over his face, and the woman is sent across the room, unconsciously sliding against the wall and down to the floor. The boy is trembling like a leaf, clutching his hands in his hair as he makes small whimpering noises. Jack goes to reach out for him, but stops midway as a bread knife points to him threateningly.

Humming fills the air. Soft, calming humming, like the honey tea Danny's going to need for his sore throat. Mesmerized, Jack listens, taken by surprise when a kitchen towel wraps around his eyes, acting as a blindfold. When he manages to remove the cloth, Danny is gone. Not from the house. The humming tells him that whoever had done all this, took his boy upstairs.

Oddly, Jack is relieved by that. Likely because, as he cleans up the kitchenware that's now fallen to the ground, he can make out that the tune that sings to Danny...

*Is **You Are My Sunshine.***

Maybe, just maybe, some ghosts are good.

The man refused to ever acknowledge that his wife planned on murdering their youngest child that day. He hardly slept at night already, if he acknowledged that Maddie made plans to try and Danny, he would have never closed his eyes again.

But the morning of Danny's birthday, that changed. He woke up with a start, planning to make breakfast when he saw her. Standing there, in front of Danny's door. A bottle of vodka in one hand, and...and a gun in the other. An ecto gun was strapped to her waist, but a real pistol was clutched in her right hand, a vacant look in her eyes.

Jack dragged the woman downstairs, then proceeded to whisper-yell as well as he could ag that empty looking woman. Danny was just turning fourteen, he- he couldn't *die,* certainly not at the hands of his own mother! What on Earth was she thinking?!

"It'll happen soon enough anyways..." Is what he got, in a low murmur. Then that cold, hard look came over her. The one that always sent Jack's heart to his stomach. She raised the gun, pressed it to his forehead, and the man winced, squeezing his eyes shut.

No shot came. Maddie hit him with the metal, over and over again, until he was on the ground trying to keep his mouth shut because God only knows how terribly she'd react to being interrupted by the kids. It *hurt,* everything hurt and his head was bleeding and this time, Maddie wasn't even crying. No, her eyes were full of hate.

That caused more pain than any amount of her beatings ever could. Maddie didn't love Jack. Not anymore.

It sent him out the door with watering eyes, a hole forming in his chest as he threw himself into the RV. Not caring about laws or is own safety, he sped away quickly as possible, not quite sure what he was doing. All he knew was that he had to go, get out, get away from that look of utter distaste his own wife had for him.

Tears blurred his vision so much that he hadn't even realized how the car was swerving, that he was on a highway a bit away from Amity. When he finally saw this, he calmed down a little, only for his heart to race more as he thought over the events of what had happened. Maddie was alone at home with a gun.

Maddie was alone *with the kids,* at home, with a gun.

At five in the afternoon, Jack Fenton pulled a sharp U-turn, speeding so impossibly fast that if a cop had seen, he'd be on the news channel labeled as a *high-speed chase.* Not that the knowledge od that could stop him. The only thing running through his mind was that he had to get to the kids, because if she could look at *him* with such absolute disgust, then how the hell has she been looking at *Danny?*

Hitting a pothole sent his car spinning, flying, and crashing directly into the forest. Jack Fenton was sent through the window of his family's RV, died choking on his own blood.

At six ten, Vlad Masters saw a crushed RV bathed in blood being towed away from fallen trees.

Stand up. Follow the doctor. Enter the morgue. Identify the body. Look upon your father, his once cheery face maimed by glass and gore. Watch him over the years lose his joy, his faith, his will to live. Stand outside the door to your parents' lab, hearing him go about his mantra of making plans to fix the woman that breaks him. Be told he's killed because of his fruitless endeavors.

You are Danny Fenton. You are sitting with your aunt Alicia as she makes plans for Dad's funeral because Mom's gone entirely mute. Your mind is going through the endless loop of *he's dead, he's dead and she killed him, he's **dead**.*

Vlad is always with you. Yes, he breathed down your neck before but now, now there's never an inch of space between you. He even stands in the bathroom while you shower. But that much was inevitable, when you suddenly lose any ability to take care of yourself. He has to wash you, feed you, brush your hair. He's taking care of you because it distracts from the fact that he probably feels like he, too, is a piece of glass.

You feel like a horrible friend. You can't take care of yourself, you can't aid your sister in her grief, you can't face your mother, and you can't give your friend the shoulder he needs to cry on. And that he does. He cries at night, because he's worried about you. Because a man he did genuinely once care about is dead. Because he's holding in all this anger you *know* he'll let out onto Mom once you're well enough again.

You don't know if you'll stop him when he does.

But it's night, the night before Dad is going to be buried, and you wish it was next to Vlad. Even if Vlad hated him for a while, he doesn't deserve to be buried alone. And you know when you die, you'll be put in the ground next to Dad. Which is right, but not exactly. Vlad should always be near your person, even in death.

Maddie should be the one buried alone. Maddie should be the one choking on her own blood. Maddie should have sprayed her insides all over the car. Maddie should be *dead,* not Dad.

Notes for the Chapter:

> No, Jack did not commit suicide. I cant imagine him doing so when he has kids at home, at least not with how his character is in this fic. I dont mean to be rude but the characterization in Danny Phantom is h o r r i b l e. I never know how to write a character because in the show they're always changing, and Danny's parents are honestly the worst. The show makes it seem like you're supposed to defend them as Danny does but just bc they arent as whack as Vlad does not mean that they're good parents. But I didn't want to make both of them terrible, at least not in this fic. There's enough angst with Vlad having PTSD and Danny being hated by his own mother, so I made Jack somewhat redeemable. Even if in the show he's a dumb bastard who doesn't think about the consequences of his actions. Ever.
>
> It's also why I never write Sam and Tucker to be very prominent figures in Danny's life. They confuse the hell out of me. Yeah, they're fifteen and they're gonna make mistakes but I don't think those mistakes should count as treating your friend like he's only worthy of your friendship because he's a superhero (which is basically what they did in phantom planet). Like...lil dude is regularly traumatizing himself and yall are kind of being dicks. It makes me sad bc like...Tucker should be Danny's Guy In The Chair (referring to Ned from the recent Spiderman movies). And honestly, Sam bugs me in general. She reeks of "I'm not like the other girls" internalized misogyny. Again, accurate because she's fifteen, but because this is an older show it's treated as cool and quirky

and its soooo annoying. And her romance with Danny just fell flat. While I know damn well my ship will never be canon, and I don't personally ship them...Valerie and Danny was way more interesting and had more chemistry. Valerie as a character was more interesting than Sam. But that's just my opinion.
Honestly it's a kid's show I shouldn't be so worked up about but the amount of potential DP had that got tossed bc the writing sucks is sad. My self indulgent brain keeps telling me to rewrite the entire show, but I just do not have the energy for that. Plus I like pomppep too much and would end up including it in some way. And considering I'm a horror writer...I would make it scary as hell. I mean, come on. Ghost kid who has to hide from his own parents because they would experiment on him, while aslo struggling with villains who either want him dead or want to turn him into their evil minion has SO much horror/whump potential.

Anyways time to dip from the face of the earth because I am ~suffering~

Salutations, readers, for...idk, a few days? It depends on if my mood decides to swing back to manic sooner rather than later.

Chapter 12

Summary for the Chapter:

> Tucker notes his friend's behavior, and Jazz and Danny make up.

Notes for the Chapter:

> So I've found that if I stay away for too long, I get worse anxiety trying to post than before. I'm currently battling with my brain forcibly isolating me from the entire world, and I cant remember where I was going with this sentence because I am half asleep.
>
> Anyways enjoy

It's Danny's first day back at school.

He's been quiet. That much is to be expected, Tucker figures. The funeral for Mr. Fenton was only a few days ago, after all. It wasn't a very good funeral. Mr. Fenton's relatives kept screaming at Mrs. Fenton and though Tucker can't really blame them, it'd be nice if they held back their anger so Danny and Jazz could've had a proper goodbye to their father.

Jazz has been acting...really weird. Like, weirder than normal. A sixteen year old know-it-all who thinks she's twenty five and is *obsessed* with psychoanalyzing people is strange enough, but now she's acting downright paranoid. She refuses to come anywhere near Danny, who looks at her like she's judged his favorite game unfairly, and is always darting around, like she's seen something in her peripherals that isn't supposed to be there.

Tucker would be more angry at her, if she didn't look so *afraid* of Danny. To be entirely fair, Tucker's always been nervous around his kind-of friend. Danny is an odd kid. He's always muttering to himself, talking to people who aren't there. In the third grade, a teacher tried to convince Mrs. Fenton to have him see a psychiatrist, and for a few weeks, she did. Then Dr. Spectra went missing, and Mrs. Fenton claimed *"shrinks"* to be useless.

But he's a good kid. He stands up for other people, even if it makes him the prime target for bullying. He's let Tucker out of many a locker, and it's not like his main interests are pinning insects to the wall and stalking people. No, he goes on passionate rants about space and listens to Humpty Dumpty. The weirdest thing about him is that he *does* believe in ghosts like his parents, but he doesn't burst into the school ecto-guns ablaze like them. In fact, he's a firm believer that not *all* ghosts are evil.

All in all, a cool guy. Even if strange things- like kids suddenly getting lost in the woods or somehow getting trapped in the school's boiler room, which remains locked at all times- happen around him, and it's usually Dash or other bullies.

Really, they *deserve* some kind of karma. But sometimes, things go too far, like when Paulina cornered Danny and started flirting with him, only to laugh, call him a freak, and act grossed out when he bumped into her trying to get out of her cage. In the same class period, a beaker somehow burst, shattering glass into her skin.

Those days, Danny would mutter a lot more to himself. As if scolding an invisible child.

Still, he's nice and he doesn't rat Tucker out for smoking pot, so it's whatever. Tuck could care less if a few bullies got their asses handed to them, even if Danny claims to have nothing to do with the occurrences. There's only been a few times where Tucker himself has been at the end of Danny's revenge gun, and it hasn't been anything too bad. He got jealous that Sam seemed to be head over heals for the kid- and honestly should've done some deeper thinking to realize that Danny wasn't and hasn't been interested in romance ever- and may or may not have been a dick because of it.

Okay, slamming the door in Danny's face because he accepted a date with Sam, not knowing it had been a date, was pushing a little far. But the kid definitely got back at him. Tucker's tablet had been full of viruses after that, and the only other person who knew his passcode was Danny. *And* the viruses vanished after he made up with the boy, who gawked at the idea of anyone having a crush on him.

"I don't know, I just," Danny shifted his weight from his right foot to his left, eyes on his sneakers, "I don't really have interest in that kind of stuff."

"Oh, don't lie to me. I've seen your internet history, man. Never expected ***you*** *to be a monster fucker." Tucker elbows his friend playfully, who's face turns a hilarious shade of tomato red.*

*Eyes jetting over to his side and then immediately down, Danny squeals, "Tuck, not cool! Besides..." He huffs heavily through his nose at his friend's giggling, "p-porn is different. I'm not interested in other..." Again, his eyes to the side, though not up. Like he's looking at someone, but refusing to meet their eyes. "... **people.** "*

"Just sexy monster men, right?" Tucker jests, as his friend wails in embarrassment and practically tackles him to the bed.

Sam has gotten affected enough times that her crush on Danny is long gone, and she considers him a tad suspicious, but not enough that she pitches a fit about hanging out with him. She can be a bit, well, cold. Mean, even. Sam's one of those, *I'm scared of showing vulnerability for some reason I won't say because of my fear, and therefore, I must hide behind a wall of anger to keep anyone from hurting me,* type of girls. Her grudge against Danny for *"leading her on"* got her shampoo replaced with bleach and all of her lipsticks replaced with hot pink ones.

The worst was when she kissed him- just a chaste thing, barely a lip brush, and seemingly out of nowhere, a bucket of pigs blood fell on her. Well, not out of nowhere, they had been standing outside of a meat shop so that Tucker could oogle at the window. But still, how would a random bucket of pigs blood drop out of a butcher's shop window? The owner came out profusely apologizing, but that was some *Carrie* shit.

Tucker is *convinced* the kid is connected to the supernatural somehow. There's no way that people who wrong Danny just so *happen* to have weird, unexplainable bad luck for the next week or so.

It's like they've pissed off a fae or something.

Anyways, yeah. Danny's presence can be pretty scary sometimes, especially now, where he looks downright enraged *all the time.* If looks could kill, that hole Danny's been burning into the lunchroom table would be straight murdering Tucker's foot right now. "Hey, dude, you okay?"

"What do you think?" Scoffs the dark haired boy, rolling an apple around on the lunch table.

"I mean- yeah- fuck," Tucker leans forward, running a hand along his face. "I don't...expect you to be okay, you know? You're going through a lot, I just want you to know that I'm here for you, dude." He looks for any change, any kind of recognition on that face that was once so energetic and dorky. Finding none, he continues, "So if you have anything in particular on your mind, you can spill. Me n' Sam will be hear to listen. Right?"

The goth girl nods sympathetically, "Right. We wanna help, Danny. Neither of us like seeing you hurt."

Danny opens his mouth and shuts it a few times, trying to find words that aren't there. Shaking his head, the boy stands, dumping his uneaten lunch into the trash and storming off.

Tucker shakes his head, telling himself he's seeing things, when a granola bar floats, turns invisible, and reappears in the side pocket of Danny's backpack.

Vlad could do it. He could tear that woman limb from limb, for daring to hurt his little Daniel. He should've done it years ago, before her unstable nature took the life of Jack Fenton. But he could also possibly make things worse for his boy, and the last thing Vlad wants is to harm Daniel more.

How is *Vlad* feeling, you might ask? The answer: he doesn't know. Thinking about Jack bloodied and scarred, crimson coating the Fenton RV, has his stomach in knots. For years, Vlad loathed Jack. Unadulterated, he fantasized about breaking him to pieces, stealing everything he loves from him. Then...then Daniel came along, and Maddie became something he could never love.

And he begun to pity Jack. He couldn't forgive him, criticized him to hell for not taking his children and running as soon as Maddie laid a malicious hand on their son. But he couldn't hate the way he once did. Saw him as a coward, yes. Realized he didn't once purposefully try to harm others? Also yes.

Maybe that pity, that sympathy Vlad usually only holds for Daniel and few demons, is getting the best of him. Jack wasn't supposed to *die.* Yes, Vlad wanted to take Daniel away from him, to hurt him. And perhaps long ago, back when Vlad's wounds were still fresh, he imagined Jack's death to be at his hand. Never at Maddie's. Would it have hurt less, if Vlad had killed his old friend instead?

Again, a question he can't quite answer. All he knows is that he aches, for Daniel, for the memories that foolishly spring into his head of a time where he and Jack were inseparable.

Either way, the death of his father has certainly harmed Daniel. For the first few days after the discovery, the boy was catatonic. Vlad found himself doing everything for the mute boy, even going so far as to possess the child when he has to stay in hiding. The boy needs that much of him, with his mother being the way she is and Jasmine being rather distant lately. One could say that's Vlad's fault, but, honestly, he doesn't give a damn. He's quite cross with the girl; she should be making sure her brother is okay, not trembling at the sight of him.

Treating him like a monster.

The eldest Masters is standing in front of his wife, cross in hand, screaming for ***damned soul*** *to go back to* ***hell.*** *Mrs. Masters stares wide eyed and the being claiming to be her son, unable to recognize Vlad past his glowing, crimson eyes and sharp fangs .*

This is the second time he's kicked from the Masters' residence, though when he looks to the window, pain tugs at his heart when his mother isn't there.

Still, Daniel loves the girl, even if they're in a spat right now. So Vlad keeps his scheming to a minimum, only ever slightly inconveniencing her. At least pressing the backspace key every ten or so seconds on the girl's laptop brings the faintest smile to his little badger's lips.

"Danny?"

They're currently laying in his bedroom, the boy curled up on his bed while Vlad had been reading the book Daniel had been assigned to make a report for. Recognizing Jasmine's voice, Vlad goes invisible, sighing and placing the book on the nightstand. Daniel rubs his temples before confirming that his sister may enter the room.

Shoulders scrunched awkwardly, Jasmine shuffles into the room. Pale fingers twiddle with her ginger hair, seafoam eyes on her black mary-janes. "How're you doing?"

"Fine," Daniel huffs, pushing himself into a sitting position. Vlad's boy is anything but fine, however, he doesn't expect the teen to trust Jasmine with that information. Or, at least, willingly give it up. Not when he's so upset with her.

"Come on, Danny," she whines, closing the door behind her. "You're clearly not fine. I- no one expects you to be." She sighs, and the tired look on her face is enough to make Plasmius feel slightly guilty for picking on her. Only a teeny, tiny bit. "*I'm* not fine."

Daniel wedges a pillow between his torso and his arms, "Its whatever. I don't want to talk about it."

Jasmine pulls the rolling chair from Danny's desk to herself, sitting on it and crossing her legs. "You shouldn't bottle it all up, Danny. Grief is an entirely normal feeling, it's nothing to feel ashamed of, or-"

"I know that!" Snaps the boy, and Vlad places a calming hand on his knee. Daniel takes in a steadying breath, shoulders slumping as he mutters, "I know, okay? I don't need you to come in here and tell me all your stupid book terms."

"Then what *do* you need?" She rolls closer, leaning forward with worried eyes.

Burying his face in the pillow, Daniel goes quiet for a moment. Vlad keeps himself from fishing into that had, not wanting to stress the child out more. Last thing he needs is that anger to be directed at himself; Daniel needs someone he trusts around to care for him, and Vlad can't do that if the boy gets angry with him and pushes him away. "I just...can't you...not be a wannabe therapist for two seconds? Please? I don't want a therapist. I want- I want my sister to talk to

me, not to try and *fix* me like I'm some, some broken toy."

"I never meant to make you feel that way," she whispers, and soon enough, Vlad is having to scoot to the end of the bed because Jasmine is climbing up there to hold Daniel. She's lucky Vlad loves her little brother so much, because he knows his little badger needs this and ignores the possessive need to swat hee arms away. "I'm sorry. I really am."

Sniffling, Danny returns the hug, "S'okay," then murmurs, "I miss dad."

"Me too."

Pulling away, Jasmine straightens her back. She pinches the younger teen's cheek, who groans with an annoyed smile as she does. Then, much to everyone's surprise, she turns to where there's a slight dip in Daniel's bed, and says: "Okay. Now you're gonna explain him or I'm gonna figure out how to use ecto-guns real quick."

Notes for the Chapter:

> Tried my very best to write Tucker and Sam as the good friends they're intended to be. I still don't like Sam so she's kind of a bitch but I've managed Tucker, I think. Though the trio isn't very close in this fic bc of how Danny's past has been changed. Danny's more of a loner due to his mom's abuse and also people being afraid of him- or, really, Vlad.

Also thought that Danny being demisexual/romantic really fit for this au? Like he's just...not interested in anyone other than Vlad in that way. Likely because his views of romance are skewed by his parents' dysfunctional relationship. Danny hasn't quite realized he has a crush on Vlad yet (tho he def is like "wow demon man kinda hot"- bc he's fourteen and if hes anything like me when i was fourteen...well, he's learning new things about himself. Puberty was such a fun time, right guys?) , much like how Vlad's feelings for Danny are just "I wanna protect you and be by your side forever", but that will change as time goes on. This IS a slowburn, after all.

Chapter 13

Summary for the Chapter:

> After years of waiting, Vlad finally shows Maddie what's become of her deceased friend.

Notes for the Chapter:

> HOOO BOY SHITS GOIN DOWN!!!!!

Telling Jazz about everything was a breather. It got a bit of junk off his shoulders, and now she isn't entirely disgruntled by the weird beasty creature that follows Danny around! Which is a total plus, since Vlad's not going anywhere. Ever. She's still a bit spooked by him, and Plasmius is still standoffish towards her, but it's one step in the direction of them getting along.

Mom, on the other hand, is a whole nother issue.

Danny has zero plans to tell her of anything related to his semi-demonic, semi-spectral companion. Not only is she a scientist who would sooner tear them apart molecule by molecule before she even begun to consider them as her son and deceased friend, but she also, you know, *hates* Danny and wants him dead so she can stop feeling guilty.

However, something needs to be done with her. With Dad gone, she's gotten...so much worse. For about a week she was quiet, only ever

glancing furiously in Danny's direction before sulking off into her bedroom or the lab. Now, she's back and she's swinging, literally. Danny isn't just dealing with his father's death and powers he doesn't at all understand, but his mother who screams that it should've been *him,* he should be dead, not Dad.

Which. Danny somewhat agrees with. But he can't say that out loud or think it around Vlad, because then his friend will go into full panic mode thinking the boy is getting suicidal. He isn't, not exactly. If he could give his life to bring back his father, would he?

...No, actually. Because then everyone would be just as miserable, and Plasmius would probably lose whatever sanity and impulse control he has left. Mom may be alive *now,* because Danny is kind of but not really protecting her, but she certainly wouldn't be if Danny were to have died instead of Dad.

Right now, everyone's in a sort of limbo. Waiting for the next drop to come. Danny isn't sure what's going to happen in the up coming days, it can't be good, not with Dad being gone. Mom has no one to hold her back now, and simultaneously, has no one to keep Vlad from unleashing hell onto her once she snaps. And it's not a matter of *if,* it's *when.*

Danny taps his pen on his desk, leg bouncing with unease. Jazz has never really been at the end of their mother's fist. Sure, she's been yelled at, but most of the time, Mom's putting all her emotional issues onto Jazz. Crying her eyes out on the girl's shoulder, expecting a sixteen year old to carry her sorrows. Since Jazz has learned about what Mom did, the girl's been avoiding her, which can't go good.

The thread that holds their family together is fraying. Danny prays Jazz isn't around when it snaps. He's used to being told he should be dead, to the beatings and hate and blame. Jazz *isn't.* He doesn't know if she could handle it, if their mother hit her. The girl is still trying to hold on to hope that Mom will change, that what she did in the past was a big mistake but she'll come around *because she's Mom and she loves us.*

Scoffing, Danny shoves away from his desk. Yeah, right. Mom stopped loving Danny long ago. He doubts she even sees him as a *person* any more. And she definitely wouldn't, if she were to learn what he is.

Plasmius talked about training him, the night Dad died. He says they should wait until Danny's more emotionally stable, that training would only cause more stress and *that* could cause trouble with his powers. It's already made him turn invisible at times of anxiety as a defense mechanism, which is troubling due to the fact that if anyone were to see him disappear...he'd be in deep trouble.

"Danny?"

The boy turns to see his sister in the door way. She motions for him to follow, and he throws a glance over his shoulder at Vlad, who's already standing. "I'll make sure your mother won't disturb us."

With that, he turns invisible and heads downstairs, confirming their trip to Jazz's dinky, pink car to be safe. As Danny buckles in, Jazz clears her throat awkwardly. "Are you...always with Danny? Like, do you follow him everywhere?"

"Unless he has asked for privacy, yes. It's my duty to protect him." Vlad straightens his position, doing that thing he does when he wants to intimidate people. Chin up, eyes down, demeanor cool. Danny rolls his eyes, holding back a snort at the ridiculous behavior.

"Okay, uh..." She trumms her fingers on the steering wheel, and Danny worriedly watches his guardian's behavior. He's fully alert, stiff and uncomfortable with being in the vehicle. Vlad might not have been inside when Dad crashed, but he was the only one to see how smashed up and brutal the accident had been.

There are few things that frighten Plasmius, that Danny knows of. Hospitals, abandonment, weakness. And now, apparently, cars.

The ginger girl is still adjusting to Vlad's presence, so Danny doesn't blame her nervousness. Especially not when he's deliberately trying to be scary. Not out of a need to frighten her, but because he registers the car as an unsafe place. Therefore, he must ward off any dangers, like an animal in the wild, protecting it's pack. "Aunt Alicia has invited us to stay with her until Mom's better."

There will be no *when Mom's better*. Mom may be able to quit booze,

might go to anger management therapy, and maybe even stop beating her family members. But there is no way for her to recover a relationship with Danny. *Nothing* she could do would ever make him feel comfortable around her. "Are you going?"

"Are you?" Seafoam eyes flicker to his momentarily, sure to focus on the road.

Quietly, Danny considers the option. It'd be away from the prying eyes of the town, which would be good for training. But if Alicia were to ever see what he is, she'd freak. And would it be the best place for Vlad? He needs energy to survive. He's been eating off of strangers- and on occasion, the Fentons- for years. It's likely that the reason it doesn't affect his or the other Fenton's health too much is that he had plenty of strangers he can eat from in town. Out in the country, that wouldn't be an option.

Tucker and Sam wouldn't be there, either. They may not be very close, but they're thr closest friends he has. Or maybe they are as close as any friends should be, and Danny's just used to a relationship like his and Vlad's; very little boundaries, always together.

"I don't have much of a choice, do I?" If he stays, Mom will try to hurt him. Try. She'd only succeed in learning what became of the man she'd killed, before meeting her demise.

"I could take you with me," Vlad interjects, causing the older sibling's

eyebrows to skyrocket, asking silently as to *where* a demon would take her little brother. "Demons don't live in the Underworld, not the ones that are sentient past the need to cause chaos," Vlad explains, "most disguise themselves as humans or ghosts and take residence on Earth, or even the Ghost Zone. Some have places to stay in the Underworld, though it depends on the type of job they have. Mine requires me to be on Earth more often than not, so my place in the Underworld is merely a room in my employer's house. But I do have a place on Earth we could go."

Danny turns to his sister, asking for permission. He wouldn't have, if he didn't think she needed him. After all, he's spent years redirecting Mom's anger towards himself so that Jazz wouldn't get hurt. He isn't used to the idea of her living without him. Again, may or may not be a side effect of his relationship with Vlad. "If you think that's the best place for you to go, I won't stop you," Jazz responds, though she sounds as if she's going to cry, "It- *he,* would be able to help you with your new powers better than I could."

She parks just outside of Nasty Burger, head dipping as she takes a shuddering breath. Then, she spins around in her seat, jabbing a finger in Vlad's direction, "If you hurt him, or let anything hurt him, I swear to God I'll find a way to become a demon hunter and kill you."

"Jasmine, I would sooner swallow nails than willingly harm Daniel," responds the older being, and Danny is sure that he's being entirely truthful. Which is both concerning and comforting. They should have a talk about self-preservation when they get home. Though that would be kind of hypocritical. "And anyone who dares to even touch a hair on his head will learn exactly what happens when you cross someone like myself."

"You two are terrible," Danny groans, dropping his head into his hands. How did he end up with two of the most overprotective people in existence?

"Us two are trying to keep mister *'paint looks kind of yummy'* alive, thank you very much," Jazz pinches his nose, and throws open the car door. "Come on, we should grab dinner and head back home before Mom figures out we're gone."

"No. You aren't leaving."

Jasmine wrings her fingers together, glancing nervously at her younger brother. Madeline has a plate clutched tightly in her hands, standing at the sink with her eyes of fury focused on the soapy water within it. Vlad is standing, focusing on everything in the room; Daniel's vitals, Jasmine's position near hee mother, Madeline's hand inching closer to a knife. The ways he could take her out, if she were to take her status as a threat to the max.

"M-Mom, it's not up for discussion. Our things are already packed, I...you need, we can't-"

And thus, the tiny thread that held the Fentons together snaps. Madeline's kitchen knife slashes through the air and before Vlad can stop it, Daniel's already moved. Of course, he's still watching, wary, but this might be good for Daniel. If anyone has a right to stand up to his mother, it's the boy. Vlad will only step in if necessary, or if told to.

Ectoplasmic green eyes burn into his mother's violet, his fingers wrapped around her gloved wrist. She hasn't taken off her hazmat suit since her husband's death. "Jazz. Go upstairs."

But, Danny," she reaches out to touch the glowing skin of her younger sibling, who repeats himself more sternly. With a quick nod, she dashes to her room, concern lining her face as she does.

Madeline's jaw is slacked, eyebrows brought together in angry confusion. "What...*are you?"*

"I'm your son," hisses the boy, increasing the pressure on his mother's limb. She winces, yanking her arm away and taking a step back. Daniel is hovering, coldly watching her take a fighting stance.

"You were *never* my son," she whispers, only the tiniest bit of sadness in her eyes. Vlad holds back a noise of disgust at the claim, invisibly making his way towards the child, while a duplicate sets out to dismantle the ghost alarm blaring throughout the house.

"Right, because you sold me to a demon, like- like I was some kind of...*product.* And not your child," spits the boy in response, as his mother's hands clasp onto the ecto-gun strapped to ger waist.

She folds her arms, weapon in hands. "Demons don't exist, Danny. That ghost has clearly turned you into her minion," shudders the woman, as if just being in the same room as the boy *she damned,* is so horrible that she physically cannot bare it. Vlad reminds himself not to intervene, rubbing soft circles between Daniel's shoulder blades to show his support.

"Believe what you want to believe. It's not like I can change your mind," shrugs Daniel, "but me and Jazz are leaving. You aren't safe for us to be around."

Gawking, *"I'm* not safe for her to be around?! You're a ghost!" Then, she pauses, face relaxing with some sort of realization that Vlad is certain is wildly incorrect. "You. It's you. You're the one who's been harassing my family for years!" She screeches, accusing gun pointed at Daniel, who shows little fear. Maybe the boy hasn't had much practice with his powers, but he trusts Vlad to protect him.

The fact that Daniel trusts him enough to stand in front of a loaded gun, subconsciously knowing Vlad would be able to tear her fingers off before she could even *think* about pulling the trigger, sends a wonderful rush fluttering to Vlad's heart that he files away for later. Right now, he must focus on the fight. Later, he can smother his

darling little badger with as much love as he's feeling right now.

"Oh, sure, *I've* been harassing the family," Daniel snorts, leaning in with a sickening sneer, that he must have learned from Vlad, "then tell me, *Mom,* what happened to Dad's head? Why did the doctors say it appeared someone had been *hitting him repeatedly?"*

Pride swells in Vlad's chest, a smile twitching at his lips as Daniel speaks. He can already tell his dear boy is going to be a powerful ghost, one that may or may not be too kind for his own good, but still will be able to hold his own, once Vlad teaches him how to harness all that potential practically *oozing* off of him. Is this how Hades feels about Persephone, both Goddess of Spring and bringer of death?

Madeline throws herself at the boy, lunging to grab at his throat. Likely having forgot she's no longer speaking to the human side of Daniel. The child darts out of the way, watching her fall forward and aim the gun at him. A blast of green shoots past Daniel's head, who dodges it with ease. Years of avoiding punches isn't good on a child, but it's certainly helping in this situation.

Vlad sits back, watching the two go back and forth. Daniel, attempting to talk some sense into his mother, and Madeline, ignoring every word. Punctuating any sentences she does speak with ecto-blasts, whilst inching her way to the lab. She's likely hoping to get ahold of that net she had made not even days prior.

The portal working has been both a blessing and a curse; a blessing, because it's moving forward with Vlad's plans to rule over Earth. A curse, because now the woman has managed to capture ghosts and experiment on them, leading her to make more efficient weaponry.

"Daniel," he says in a hushed tone, "do not let her get to the basement. There's too many dangers down there for you." Emphasis on the *you* part, as, mere ecto-weapons might annoy Vlad, but a demon such as himself isn' thwarted so easily.

"Got it," responds the boy, who's mother demands she see who he's speaking to. Of course, Daniel waves off her request, listening as Vlad quietly gives him tips as to how to fight her.

Things get a little tight when Daniel begins to tire out. Someone who hasn't been harnessing their powers for very long would exhaust quickly, and the younger half isn't exactly in the best of shape. At some point, Madeline gets the upper hand, pinning a collapsed Daniel to the floor with a triumphant smile. "Any last words, freak?" She asks, nozzle of the gun to Daniel's forehead.

"Yes, actually," Daniel huffs, a stream of green leaking from his nose. His hand reaches upwards, fingers poking Plasmius' boot. "Tag, fruitloop. You're it."

A set of pearly white fangs are what Madeline is greeted with, when Vlad hides Daniel behind him and prepares to lunge forward.

Notes for the Chapter:

I'm a little too proud of the Hades/Persephone comparison.

Anyways, I suck at writing fighting scenes, so you're gonna have to forgive me if the next chapter sucks and if I only vaguely reference Danny's training.

Chapter 14

Summary for the Chapter:

> Family fights can be very stressful, especially when someone doesn't know how to stay out of the way.

Notes for the Chapter:

> sorry jve been slow to update. ive got hit pretty bad with writers block and because i also have to work on original works...ive been kinda slackin on fanstuff.
> i guess ill label this a semi-hiatus for now? im not gonna be gone for weeks but my regular updating schedule is now just "i update as soon as possible but that might not be for a few days"

Her heart is racing.

There he is. The man that started this all.

Vladimir Masters. Man turned ghost, who's been haunting Danny since the moment he was born. He looks different in his ghost form, but those facial features couldn't belong to anyone else. Long face and

nose, strong cheekbones and jaw. Thick brows.

"I would say it's nice to see you again, Madeline," says that voice, *his voice,* the one that's sung to her, her husband, that child on the ground, "but that would be a lie. The only *nice* thing that's going to happen, is making you pay for all you've done."

In the blink of an eye, she's thrown, back slamming against the wall. Glaring scarlet eyes approaching her as she lands a shot on him- one that causes a momentary sizzling hole on his shoulder. It vanishes, healed completely quicker than she's ever seen.

Ghosts have been all over as of late, with the opening of the portal, and to distract herself from...from Jack, she's been fighting them. Making weapons to kill the monsters that she *knows* tore her family apart. Sure, her ecto-pistol isn't *that* strong, but there's no way he should've been able to heal it so fast.

"You," she says as gloved fingers wrap around her throat, "aren't-"

"Oh, yes, *I'm not Vlad anymore.* Because according to your pathetic research, ghosts are beings of memories and ectoplasm, that cannot feel emotion." He makes a motion like he's rolling his eyes, though with them being pitless, she isn't for sure that's what he's doing. "And dearest Madeline can never be wrong, can she?"

All the fury he's felt building over the years is crashing past the flood gates inside of him, his impulse control completely shattered by it's violent, crashing waves. He presses his hand to her ribcage, focusing in on the thumping sound emitting from beneath the skin. No longer does he have a heart that beats. A core keeps him warm, has him touching fire with a sigh of comfort. But there is no blood, no organs. Not like her's, anyway.

"You've tormented my Daniel for long enough," hisses the hybrid, who rips off protective black gloves with his teeth. They were made specifically after he'd been assigned to the boy. Couldn't have his

claws puncturing that soft skin of his, after all. "I've spent so long protecting him from your wrath. Suffering because of what *you* did." His fingers flex, slightly, tearing holes into her teal hazmat suit. "I think it's time you take some responsibility for your actions."

Pinching, something akin to a piercing, erupts in his side and he grits his teeth, glancing down at the wound she's caused. Madeline may have dropped her ecto-gun, which Danny now turns over in his hands with a raised brow, but she happened to have a double-edged, ecto-sword lodged into the place that one of Vlad's kidneys should be located.

With his free hand, he grabs the one she has wrapped around the metallic handle of the weapon. Slowly, he increases the pressure of his grip, digging long, sharp claws into her flesh, listening with a blank face as those bones crack and crumble under his grasp. Ignoring her screams of pain as he does so, he kicks the weapon out of reach.

Madeline falls bonelessly on the ground, face contorted in pain. Vlad turns back to Daniel, asking for permission to continue. The boy

swallows, coming forward-

"Stop!"

Jasmine is right where he hoped she wouldn't be. Standing between himself and her mother, eyes frantic and not at all understanding the situation. "Y-you broke her hand!" She stammers, slowly crouch in front of Madeline. "That...that's not...this isn't necessary!" Shouts the girl, sending a hateful glare Vlad's way.

"Neither were the years of abuse she put your brother and yourself through," calmly replies the man, never removing his infuriated gaze from Madeline's.

"Just because she hurt us doesn't mean we get to hurt her!" Jasmine

stands, planting firm feet to the ground, folding her arms. "Causing her harm isn't needed. You were supposed to mediate and get Danny out of here safely, not *break her hand!"*

Jaw tight, Vlad responds coldly, "Do not forget what you're speaking to, girl. I am a *demon.* I do not do conflict mediation. I *end* conflict. I am not bound by your pathetic human morals that deem her a salvageable soul."

She backs up as he approaches, still protecting her horror of a mother, who's now leaning against the wall. Looking for some way out of this. The woman leans forward, lips close to her daughters ear" and she says, "Jazz, listen to me. That isn't your brother. Thay is a ghost inhabiting-"

Firing an ectoblast to her shin, causing her knees to buckle and crash back to the ground, Vlad commands her to stay quiet, and Jasmine turns to her brother and pleads, "Danny, *do something!"*

"Why?" Is Daniel's response, who's expression is a blank sort of dark, in a way that only makes Vlad want to snap Madeline's neck even more. "Why should I do anything to help her? The only person who's ever saved me from her is standing right in front of you."

"I know, okay?" The girl is crying now and he should feel something, but he doesn't. "I-I know I should've been there for you more often, and I *know* she's done awful things to you, but, that, that doesn't mean she should *die!"*

"She tried to kill me first!" Screams the younger teen, face breaking from it's stony expression and twisting, flushed with rage and betrayal, "multiple times! Her abuse killed Dad! How can you say she doesn't deserve this when I would be *dead* if it weren't for Vlad?!"

"Revenge isn't going to help anything-"

"I beg to fucking differ-"

Just as Vlad takes his eyes away from Madeleine to turn to Daniel and ask if he can lock the girl upstairs because she *clearly* doesn't understand the severity of the situation, the woman lurches down, swoops up the abandoned blade, and, thank God for his reflexes, because she almost puts it through Daniel's throat.

The boy had been slowly approaching, close behind Plasmius as he and Jasmine fought. With one thrust of her arm, she managed to graze a small cut above his windpipe, one that, if deeper, would have killed him.

That's the final straw. He was going to wait for Daniel's signal, to see what he wanted to do with his mother. But she's almost killed him one too many times. Vlad would've ended her the first time, if Daniel hadn't been so attached to her. She had this nasty habit of attempting

homicide when Vlad wasn't around, too. It's one of the few reasons his direct loathing wasn't so focused on Jack anymore; at least the man saved his son during *those* times.

He's let things go too far for too long.

Seeing red is a good way to describe the blood thirsty rage he feels when he uses a duplicate to haul Jasmine upstairs despite Daniel's protests. *Feeling* crimson is more accurate to the way he forces Madeline to the floor and breaks her ribs with his bare hands, wrapping his fingers around that cold, soon-dead heart of her's. Someone is screaming; it falls on his deaf ears as flames take up a good portion of the body and the carpet around him.

It beats, rich red blood dripping off of his black gloves. It beats, until it doesn't. And the sound fading is much more satisfying of a sight than that goreish RV being towed away.

Notes for the Chapter:

> sorry for that abrupt ass ending. it was getting too long, so im chopping this scene into two chapters.
>
> and again sorry if its not that good. writing with writers block is near impossible for me.

Chapter 15

Summary for the Chapter:

> A fight between siblings occurs, and we get a flashback from the pov of Jack
>
> (chapter name from Cherry Wine by Hozier, if you want an added layer of angst, i recommend listening to the song while reading. esp while in the jack pov section.)

Notes for the Chapter:

> finally, i have managed to write this chapter. god, im sorry its been a while. im just really not vibin right now. one minute the imposter syndrome kicks in bc "you had a decent conversation with people for an hour therefore ur just fine" and the next im like "jumping off a bridge sounds cool"
>
> dont worry about it, im. fine. i'm just trying to wait it out so i can talk to my psychiatrist abt it. hopefully he'll know what to do.

Danny follows the clone that drags his sister away without hesitation. Sure, he wanted her out of the way, with how childishly she was approaching the situation, but Vlad was treating her like an unwanted sack of potatoes. Mo- ... *Maddie* is the only one here who deserves to be hurt, and Danny could tell from a quick glance that the grip on Jazz's wrist is gonna cause bruising.

Wincing, Danny watches Plasmius toss the girl against the back end of the hallway. Confliction raises in his chest, the need to protect his sibling at all costs and the anger he feels when she calls out for their mother. How can she not understand that Maddie *deserves this?* Years

Danny spent trembling in fear, crying because he didn't know why mommy didn't love him. So many days, the boy had been afraid it would be his last.

There were even nights where Vlad had to sit him down and firmly tell him that *no,* it isn't his fault that his mother is hurting him and *yes,* Danny *is* worthy of love. If it hadn't been for Plasmius, Danny would've gone through with all those awful thoughts that plagued his head. An eleven year old shouldn't think about jumping off the roof of his home, or have to make excuses as to why he was rummaging through the medicine cabinet when caught by his father.

Instinctively, his fingers itch at his sleeve.

Vlad was quick to make sure he ended that habit, but the scars are still there. All caused by *her*.

Yet Jazz is still set on protecting her. Jazz, his big sister, who took him out of the house when mommy and daddy were yelling so loud he was afraid his eardrums would pop. The girl who'd let him follow her around at recess when Vlad was busy because all the other kids were too afraid to play with him and Tucker was sick at home.

They can fix this. Just like they did before. He just needs to make her understand, and she will. She's always been the smarter one out of the two of them. "Vlad, *stop!"* He snaps, when the clone twists Jazz around and pins her to the wall the same way Danny would see cops in TV shows do.

Instantly the blue-skinned hybrid freezes. Danny's ruffled feathers smooth out, knowing that his protector hasn't lost it entirely. He knows that seeing Maddie get so close to killing Danny again must've snapped something within Vlad and while the thought is scary, it's saddening as well. Danny is important to the man- *"the most important thing in the world,"* Plasmius had called him. His companion would sooner let the world burn than lose Danny, and likely felt nothing short of heart-stopping terror at the sight of the ecto-weapon poised at the boy's throat.

"You didn't have to be so rough with her..." Huffs the boy, shooting a weak glare at his guardian.

Vlad makes a motion like rolling his eyes, "She could have gotten you *killed,"* but loosens his grip enough that Jazz is able to relax.

The ginger manages to yank herself out of his grasp- which more than likely means he allowed her to- face red with anger. Tears are welled in her eyes, and Danny feels a slight pang of guilt, if only for causing pain to his dear sister. "He killed our mother, he, you let a demon *murder* our mother!"

"She is *not* my mother," snaps the boy, guilt diminishing at her furious accusations. "She is an attempted murderer, and a victim-blaming abuser at best!"

"She was sick!" Jazz insists, fists tight at her sides, "I'm not saying she isn't awful for what she's done, but people like her need *help,* not death!"

Swallowing hard, Danny tries his best to contain his growing feeling of betrayal. His voice is shaking, both with hurt and anger, "We needed help. She needed prison. But you know damn well that wouldn't have happened until I was dead!"

"We could have called child protective servi-"

He cuts her off, "Would you have?" slowly floating to her, not even noticing that he's still in his ghost form. Should he name this half of him, like Vlad has? Probably, if he wants to keep it a secret and still live among humans. Danny hasn't exactly had time to decide that. "Can you honestly say you would have called CPS? You didn't when she hurt us in the past. Face it, Jazz, you've got it in your head that you can fix her yourself."

Danny continues, "News flash- you aren't a real fucking psychiatrist! You're sixteen and her treating you like you're her therapist is emotional abuse!"

"She's confiding in me, not abusing me! It's a good thing!" She says, though her eyes betray her. He can tell that she knows damn well that Maddie should have never been using her as a crutch for emotional stability, dumping all her worries onto her child, one who's too young to fully comprehend them. But Jazz has got it in her head that she's an adult, a know-it-all who's just a bit too much like Dad, in the aspect that they think they can fix Maddie with a little bit of love and support.

Maddie passed *love and support* when she'd caught Danny softly

singing with Vlad and proceeded to hold him down while screaming about how he was a stupid boy for doing something so dangerous as inviting ghosts into their homes. He'd been so terrified of her that day, watching in horrified stillness as she tore apart his bedroom, breaking his saturn-shaped lamp and yelling for the ghosts to *leave her baby alone.*

Dad had to tell the doctors who stitched Danny's leg up, when the glass from the lamp shattered too close and sliced open his skin, that he and Jazz were rough housing and, *well, you know how kids can get!* The doctor had chuckled and supplied Danny with a lollipop, but he hadn't been feeling well enough for candy, so he let Jazz have it.

"You're making excuses for her," Danny shakes his head in disbelief, "why- you wouldn't do this for anyone else! She tried to kill me, beat me so many times that I flinch when someone does so much as raise their hand too quickly!"

She opens her mouth, as if daring to try to convince him, but she closes it again. Her eyes shut tight, tears finally escaping down her cheeks. "What she did to you doesn't give you a right to play God, Danny. It doesn't justify you killing her."

"If I may interject," Vlad starts, though it's clear he's asking for Danny's permission, not her's. The ravenette nods, unable to bring his voice out of his throat. "Madeline had a sword to his throat with the intentions of murder. Daniel's actions were completely in self defense, as, even before this, *she attacked first.* Even what I did could be considered as such, since I acted only to protect Daniel when she tried to kill him. Is that not a good enough justification for your human morals?"

Red hot fury flashed in her eyes, something Danny had never seen before from his older sister. Jazz had always been the calm one, level, telling Danny not to lash out and do things he might regret later. "You *tore her heart out of her chest!"* The rough sound her throat makes, the way it hallows out and her blood flushes her face, shows that she's finally, fully cracked. "That's not defense!"

Vlad tries to continue, to say what Danny's been trying to this entire time, but she holds up a hand, cutting him off. Within seconds he's slamming her against the wall again, causing pain to bloom on her already contoured face. "Idiot girl, you're defending a woman who'd take relief in the killing of your own brother, if only because it means she won't feel guilt at the very sight of him."

Danny rushes forward, intent to scold Vlad, "Hurting her will only make things worse- Vlad, *stop!"*

The man's grip had tightened so much on Jazz, that she let out a sharp scream as her wrist was fractured. Danny gagged at the sound, forcibly ripping Plasmius away from her, not sure who he should be more pissed with. Jazz, for demonizing himself for finally putting an end to the years of abuse Maddie put onto him, or Vlad, for being so physical with a girl clearly too brainwashed to see how horrible her mother really is.

"Jazz, are you alright? We should...the first aid kit, it's in the bathroom," he gently takes her uninjured hand and tries to nudge her in the direction he wants her to go, worry increasing at the numb look in her eyes as she caresses her limp hand.

"Don't touch me." Her voice is cold enough that something is triggered within Danny. A fight or flight reflex, an instinctual terror at how much she sounds like...like...

No. Jazz could *never* resemble Maddie. God, what's *wrong* with him?

Still, her eyes are hard when they meet his. "You're not...you've

changed, Danny. And not in a good way." Even with how harshly her words leave her lips, he can hear the slightest amount of fear among them. Fear. Jazz is afraid of him for protecting the both of them from Maddie. *She's afraid of Danny.*

"You're not my little brother anymore." So quiet, and yet, that sentence tears through him worse than any ecto-sword could. His heart stops, stomach flipping violently as his jaw drops, "Leave, right now. Or- or...I'll tell everyone you did this."

No, no, she can't really mean that. His hand reaches out to her, "Jazz, please..."

"I said go away, ***murderer!****"*

He watches her crumble, back dragging against the wall as she collapses onto the ground. Violent sobs wrack her body, cries for their mother and father hanging in the air. There's a realization that hits Danny, the knowledge that she was clinging to the only parent she had left, afraid of being alone. Danny took that away from her, the unlikely redemption she fantasized about for Maddie. Didn't even give her the chance to try.

There's no regret in letting Maddie perish. Letting her stay alive would have only caused more hurt, could've caused her to drag Jazz down with her. But right now, Danny is the villain. Jazz can't recognize that he was only trying to protect them. No matter what he does, may it be take the punch or break the first that's harming him...he's the bad guy.

Hoping some alone time will make her more rational, Danny holds back his tears as he nods to Vlad, who takes him into his arms and flies them off.

Dark, dark, dark. Purple bags beneath her violet eyes, hair frazzled, once sun kissed skin pale. Maddie's never looked so tired.

Jack sets a plate down in front of her. Strawberry lips twitch, but the smile doesn't last. His heart aches at the sight. She hasn't slept in weeks, plagued by night terrors that no amount of pills will take away. Jack tried making something in the lab to help her, but...he's a ***ghost hunter.*** *A paranormal investigator. Not a pharmacist.*

A black gloved hand gently brushes against his bruised cheekbone. An accident, really. They got into an argument, just a small quarrel, nothing more. She had tried to make it to the stairs, and he didn't get out of her way in time. So he took a tumble, landed face first on the floor. Ouch, but, in retrospect, it must've looked pretty funny! Dan-o might've laughed, had he seen his big ol' father flop to the floor like that.

"I'm sorry," she whispers, like anything louder will break her voice.

His poor, sweet Maddie. The woman he knew to be strong as bricks has been as easy to blow over as paper these past few years. Postpartum depression developed into postpartum psychosis- or, at least, that's what Jack suspects from what Jazzy has told him- and it's taken it's toll on her.

The other night, he had to pull her out of Danny's room because she had trashed the place, screaming at her son because she'd become ***convinced*** *she saw Vlad there! Vladdie, of all people. Their dead friend, who he*

knows she feels immense guilt over. She hears voices, usually him singing that damn song. Sometimes, she even manages to convince ***Jack*** *he's hearing it, too!*

"Shh," he hushes, bringing her face into his shoulder. It didn't hurt all that bad. Jack's a big man, he can take a whole lot. A good thing, too, because Maddie is a woman with a strong arm. "Why don't you head upstairs and rest? I'll make dinner tonight."

She pulls away, wiping the tears from her face. Lipstick stains the purple blotch underneath his eye before she's off. He sighs, wincing as he stands. Those stairs are hard as rock. He's gonna have to see about getting them covered by carpet or something. One little slip, and the kids that run around his house could break their head open!

He doesn't like how his mind supplies him with the image of Danny taking his place, Maddie shoving the seven year old down a flight of stairs during one of her episodes. She wouldn't do that. She ***loves*** *Danny. How many times has she stayed up awake next to his bed, convinced someone was coming for him?*

Everything else was an ***accident*** *. Mistakes happen. They do.*

Speak of the devil, his son comes tip toeing into the kitchen, twiddling with the end of his shirt. Baby blue eyes widen at the sight of his father's injuries, "Daddy?"

"Hey, kiddo." Jack scoops him up and plops him on the counter, rummaging through the cupboards for something easy to make. "Wanna help Dad cook mac n' cheese?"

Danny wasn't quiet, not until recently. When he was a toddler, he'd run around screaming and shouting, playing with some imaginary figure. He'd giggle loudly when his dad would lift him into the air and pretend like he's a rocket ship. Danny would crawl into his mother's lap and cuddle her with ease.

But that was before Maddie's illness got worse. Now he rarely speaks, almost looking afraid to. He hides in his room most days, refuses to meet anyone's gaze. Unlike Jazz, who's fidgety and doing whatever she can to make her parents proud, even if it means studying way more than she should, Danny seems determined to make the world forget he exists at all.

Jack wishes he could tell his son that he doesn't need to be afraid. But this is...a scary situation, for someone so young. Danny wouldn't understand, the most he can comprehend is that ***mommy's brain is sick, and that means we have to be extra understanding when she's mad, okay?***

They eat, Jazz chattering on about school while Danny picks at his food. Jack brings some up to Maddie, and falls asleep in the lab.

When he wakes, a thick blanket is put over his shoulders. It's one of the winter ones, kept on too high of a shelf for either of the children to reach. So Maddie must've brought it down to him.

Notes for the Chapter:

> don't be too mad at jazz, okay? she's still a kid, scared of bein an orphan, who's defending her mother because in her eyes, maddie is just sick and needs someone to care for her. i'll get into it more in later chapters, but maddie has been emotionally abusing jazz for a while now. look up "emotional/ covert incest" if you want to get a better understanding of what jazz is going through and why she's so attached to maddie. they've basically become co-dependant on one another, leaving jazz to feel like she's responsible for her mother's actions. (though i will say, no ACTUAL incest has happened in this story and i dont plan on making it happen.)
>
> and while it may take a while, i will have the siblings reconcile. i love jazz too much not to have her come around, it's just gonna take a while.

Chapter 16

Summary for the Chapter:

> Jazz is determined to save her little brother from the "monster manipulating him".

Notes for the Chapter:

> sorry this one is kind of short, it's kind of an interlude chapter before we move on to arc two.
>
> hoo boy yall gonna be MAD at Jazz for a while. but i mean, can you really blame her for the way she thinks? shes known vlad for like. a couple of days. Maddie, she's known her entire life. was raises by her. ofc she'd trust maddie over a random demom that claims he's protecting danny.

Daddy's been out for the past few days, and won't be back until the week is over. It's some kind of ghost convention, a thing he needs to go to raise money for their projects. He wanted Mommy to come with him, said they could hire a babysitter, but Mommy doesn't trust anyone else with her and Danny. She says they wouldn't know how to protect the kids from ghosts, so she insisted on staying.

To be honest, Jazz is glad she did. She hates ghosts, in particular, the stupid one Danny won't stop playing with. That one is scary, and he upsets Mommy, yet Danny keeps letting him in the house anyway! He's got sharp teeth and claws and horns, and his eyes are red as blood- he's clearly a bad guy! But Danny keeps saying he's ***good,*** *and that he only wants to protect Danny.*

Can't her brother see that ***Mommy*** *wants to protect them, and that ghosts*

are evil liars? Mommy says the ghosts are trying to take Danny away and make him evil like them. So they sent a guy to make Danny feel safe and okay around ghosts, that way, taking him will be easier. It's why Jazz has to stay with Mommy all the time and isn't allowed to play with Danny much. If they try to take Danny, they might also grab Jazz, and poor Mommy and Daddy would be heartbroken if they lost ***both*** *their kids.*

But it's also why Mommy stands outside Danny's room with weapons at night. She has to make sure he's safe at all times, even if Danny doing dumb stuff scares her and makes her angry. If she can't keep him from hurting himself, at least she can protect Jazz from his ghost friends.

Jazz doesn't like to think about that, though. Danny is her baby brother, she wants to save him from the mean spirits that are trying to brainwash him. She's just a kid though, only ten to Danny's eight. So she has to trust that her parents will make the right decisions. Besides, Daddy is big and strong, and Mommy is super smart. They won't let anyone take Danny away.

The girl nuzzles close in her mother's arms. Right now, they're in the secret safe room, because Mommy said the ghost is in the house again. She scooped up Danny, who's currently asleep on the floor across from them, and had Jazz follow her into this tiny room so they could hide.

"I'm not letting anyone take you away from me," Mommy murmurs, squeezing Jazz close to her chest. Her eyes look like they do when she's focusing a lot, pinned on the sleeping little boy. "You're my kid, right, Jazzie ? You aren't gonna run away with some ghost?"

"Nuh-uh!" The girl tiredly exclaims, rubbing her eyes. She wishes she could crawl over and curl up next to her brother, to make sure no dastardly spector grabs his ankle and pulls him through the wall, but Mommy says it's safer if she stays in her lap.

"You have to stay awake, okay?" Mommy leans her head against Jazz's ginger hair, squeezing her wee shoulders tight, "can't...can't fall asleep. Mommy needs someone to help her look for the ghosts. You can do that, right?"

"I'll always help you, Mommy," Jazz pinches herself hard to jog her senses, clutching her mother's hazmat suit.

Jazz sobs into her knees.

None of this is right. It wasn't supposed to go like this. Mom isn't some...evil, cartoon villain who would *kill* her own son. Jazz was certain Danny had been exaggerating in the past, when he said that Mom had tried to kill him. He was a little boy, after all. His fear and anger probably just got the best of him. Or so she thought.

Even then, she was sure when they explained to Mom that Danny was still *Danny* and not some ghost, that she would see how her poor parenting had effected her son. She would see, and she would realize she needs help. Everything would get better, just like Dad always said it would.

But Danny- he didn't even give her a chance! He sicked that...that *monster* onto their mother! The woman who raised them, read them bedtime stories, made them cake on their birthdays! She hasn't been great as of recently, but that doesn't change the fact that killing her was too far. She wasn't trying to hurt anyone. Sick people like her get help, not...not...

Her wrist throbs painfully. Gritting her teeth, she forces herself to her feet. Tears blur her vision, but she manages to stumble into the bathroom. Luckily, due to Danny's habit of getting injured in school fights and Dad's habit of slipping up in the lab, they keep things like splints on hand. She fixes up her injury the best she can, swallows a few pain pills, and sighs shakily.

How could he? Danny had always been at the brunt of her bouts of anger. She knows Mom would yell at him, tear up his room, and sometimes, she'd smack him. All of this was because that *delusion* she has, though. She never wanted to actually hurt Danny, she was convinced she was protecting him. Now, Jazz is certain that part of that delusion had been the truth.

Vlad. Vlad had to have been egging on Mom's illness. Maybe even forcing her to hurt Danny. He's been...manipulating Danny, making

the boy think his mother is evil, that way he can take him away. Just like Mom always said the *"ghost"* would. She bets he even killed Dad.

Her stomach twists with guilt and anger. She really fucked up, didn't she? Jazz just sent her little brother off with the very thing Mom had been trying to protect him from! She should have never trusted that jerk. Of course Danny would run to him, he's a kid who feels ignored! Children ignore their better judgements when they're feeling neglected all the time. How *dare* Vlad take advantage of her baby brother?!

Somehow, she'll make sure that *demon* pays for the wreckage he's put unto her family. She doesn't care what she has do, she'll save Danny. Mom and Dad can count on her to do so. She won't let that monster turn her baby brother into something as awful as him, and, well. She sure hopes she isn't too late.

With weak legs, she makes her way downstairs. Swallowing nervously, eyes fixated on the place where Mom's body should be. There's nothing. No blood, no body, no signs of struggle. Nothing. That bastard.

No one will believe her if she says a demon killed her mother and stole her brother. They'll lock her up, call her crazy. Running her nails through her messy, ginger hair, she wipes tears away with her uninjured hand. She'll have to report them missing and work in secret. Sam and Tucker, Danny's friends, they'll help her. They saw so muc that she didn't, that she had brushed off.

Mom probably has more evidence in the lab. After Mom had found Danny missing from his bed one too many times, she installed monitors in their rooms, that way she could see if anyone came in. She made Jazz promise not to tell Dad, though.

"He wouldn't understand, he thinks I'm overreacting," Mom says, hiding Danny's camera among the books gathering dust on his bookshelf. "Even if there isn't anyone coming in here...Danny still sneaks out too much. I need to make sure he's safe."

Jazz bites her lip. This is a breach of privacy. But Mom's right. If Danny is going to insist on breaking rules... he needs to be watched more carefully, right? He's brought this onto himself. "I won't tell."

Her black gloves cup Jazz's face, and a soft smile spreads across her ruby lips. "My smart girl. Help me set up the other ones, will you?"

She'll gather anything she might need from the lab, tell Aunt Alicia that Danny and Mom have gone missing, then...

Well, all she can do is wait.

Notes for the Chapter:

> to some extent...jazz is kinda right. maddie still would have been abusive without vlad's influence, but him giving maddie nightmares and tormenting

her in retaliation for what she does to danny...probably just caused more conflict, rather than scaring her away entirely like he intended. dw, that WILL get addressed.
however...baby gurl is in denial. a few times, i referenced from jazz's pov that she always thought danny was exaggerating maddie's violence- this is because, if you noticed in previous chapters, jazz is never present when maddie gets REALLY physical. she's sure to keep jazz in the dark, since she knows jazz would've done something, or begun to hate her, if she saw her throwing danny around like she does in private.

so jazz still has a lot of learning to do. it's hard to come to terms with someone you care so much about being abusive, enough that you might blame others for their abuse. i would know ive been in jazz's situation. abusers tend to pit their victims against their support systems, making sure their victim has no one to go to. weather they do this intentionally or not doesnt matter.

anyways sorry for the ramble. what im saying is: you can be mad at jazz, but the poor girl really is trying to do whats right.

Author's Note:

I hope you guys enjoy this fic! Get ready, because I have a lot of both sadness, horror, and cute fluffy shit prepared for this!